



# THE INDEPENDENT

Nº 3,160

SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 1996

WEATHER: Mainly dry

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## Clarke could slash tax by 3p

Diane Coyle and Colin Brown

The Chancellor could deliver a much bigger tax bonanza in next Tuesday's Budget than expected, according to City experts. Some are now predicting up to 3 pence off the basic rate of income tax, with a giveaway worth as much as £6bn rather than the prudent £2bn-3bn they previously anticipated.

larger tax cuts than the state of the economy justifies.

Steven Bell, chief economist at investment bank Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "If the Chancellor can now keep the financial markets happy by forecasting lower government borrowing and reduce taxes by £4bn or £5bn, there is no earthly reason he will not do it ahead of the election."

But senior party figures cautioned against an over-generous give-away, which could turn sour, if it led to inflation and increased interest rates before the election.

"There have been a series of warnings on monetary aggregates and the increasing buoyancy of the housing market which should be headed by the Chancellor," said one former Cabinet minister. A ministerial source said the Chancellor was likely to concentrate on reducing the increasing debt burden, which had worried the City. But party sources are expecting a "punitive" Budget by the

Chancellor, an astute politician, who recognises it could be the Tories' last throw of the dice before the election.

The City economists calculate that better-than-forecast growth in tax revenues this year will last, giving the Government an extra £6-8bn to split between bigger reductions in VAT and corporation tax receipts. However, those missing revenues reappeared in October. Figures published on Monday showed a surge in taxes.

The City's earlier calculation that the Budget would have to be very tight this year were based on ultra-cautious Treasury forecasts for tax revenues. In its summer forecast the Treasury revised down expected revenues and revised up expected borrowing because of last year's "missing millions" in VAT and corporation tax receipts.

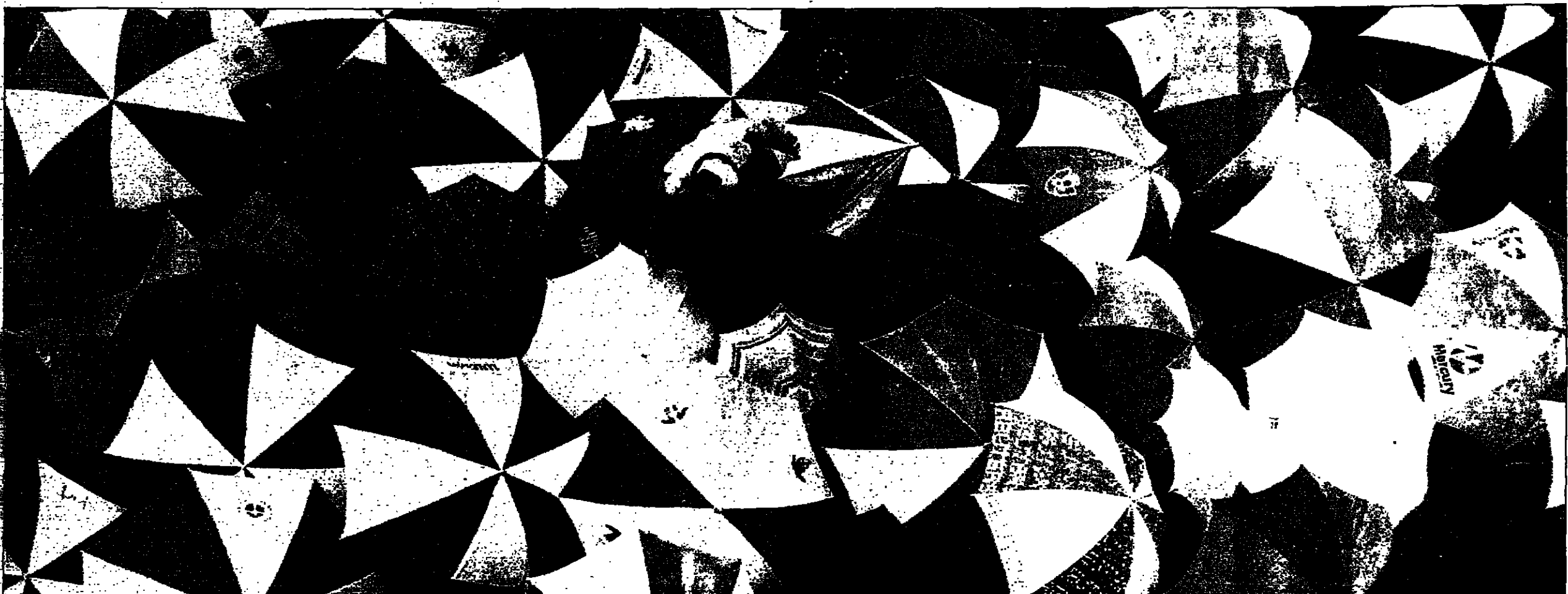
According to Mr Cole, if revenues kept up the same pace for the rest of this financial year, government borrowing could end up more than £5bn under its £27bn target.

Kevin Darlington at brokers Hoare Govett said Mr Clarke could credibly have an extra £6bn next financial year, all of it available for tax cuts if he stuck to the same borrowing forecast as before. That would allow for 3 pence off the basic rate of income tax, although he thought a combination of smaller tax cuts and reduced borrowing more likely.

Most analysts had, until this week, been predicting that the Chancellor could trim at most £2-3bn off taxes.

None of the City experts think that he should put more money in consumers' pockets, however. All put the unexpected upturn in the state of the Government's books down to the strong pick-up in spending, and argue that it should be used to get the public finances into better shape.

"The worst decision that can be taken at this stage of the cycle is to allow consumers to share in the benefits of an unexpectedly large reduction in the budget deficit," said Mr Jeffrey. That had been Nigel Lawson's mistake in the late 1980s, he said.



Good golly, my brotly: Martin Allen of North London Railways dressed as a clown to help sort out hundreds of umbrellas from Railtrack's lost property for sale yesterday at Euston station in aid of Children in Need. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

## Liberals revolt over coalition fear

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

Paddy Ashdown is facing a grassroots revolt led by one of his own MPs against a Liberal Democrat coalition with New Labour because they fear a sell out of principles for seats in a Cabinet under Tony Blair.

Elizabeth Lynne, the Liberal Democrat MP for Rochdale, and 16 senior Liberal Democrats including local council leaders and parliamentary candidates, wrote to Mr Ashdown yesterday to protest at the direction the party was taking under his leadership.

In the letter which *The Independent* has obtained, Ms Lynne says: "We need assurances that the party is not going to be sold out for a handful of Cabinet seats. If this were to be the case you certainly would not have our support on it. We are an independent party and must remain so."

Ms Lynne told *The Independent* that she believed many Liberal Democrat MPs shared her concern about the close cooperation with the Labour Party. But leadership sources made it clear that the Liberal Democrat leader's determined to carry on with the strategy, which could have a crucial bearing on the outcome of the general election.

"We understand their concerns but they are a small minority of people who are isolated," one source said. Mr Ashdown will tell the dissidents that the party endorsed his strategy by ending "equidistance" between Tory and Labour at its party conference in 1995. The extraordinarily frank terms of the letter will astonish the Liberal Democrats' opponents but Mr Ashdown's aides said there were no plans to discipline Ms Lynne.

**QUICKLY**  
Thatcher to rescue  
Baroness Thatcher called on the Euro-sceptic wing of the Tory Party to turn its attacks outwards and on to Tony Blair over Europe, rather than on to the Prime Minister. Page 2

**Miss World anger**  
Thousands of security guards have been recruited to stop disruption of the Miss World contest in Bangalore. Angry feminists have pledged to set fire to themselves. Page 11

**BMA opposes Blood**  
The BMA ethics committee urged that Diane Blood's plea to use her dead husband's sperm be rejected. Page 3

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## New Labour, old records for Desert Island Blair

Claire Garner

What do the 70s rock band Free, Barbra Streisand for Strings, a little-known Cambridge band called Ezio and the Beatles have in common? They are all, *The Independent* can reveal, top of Tony Blair's personal charts.

The Labour leader yesterday went to Broadcasting House to bare his musical soul to Sue Lawley for *Desert Island Discs*, which will be broadcast at 12.15pm tomorrow.

Sources at the BBC revealed that the castaway's selection included the Barbra Streisand piece of music of the film *Platoon* and *The Elephant Man*. "Concert 'Rocky' noted for its 'saccharine romanticism' and sung by a little-known Cambridge band called Ezio, and 'Wishing Well' by Free feature in Mr Blair's selection of eight tunes. Free's most famous song is 'All Right Now'. Wishing Well is described in the recently released *Rough Guide to Rock* as 'Rodger's [the lead singer] heartfelt plea to Kossoff [who was on drugs] to pull himself together'."



Mr Blair's luxury item remains a secret, but Mr Major asked to be stranded with a full-size replica of the Oval cricket ground and a bowling machine and Margaret Thatcher, then leader of the Opposition, supplemented her musical choices in 1978 with a photograph album. The former Labour leader John Smith chose a case of champagne, while his predecessor Neil Kinnock asked for the luxury of Radio 4.

Mr Blair's selection includes none of the records he chose for Radio 1's *Nicky Campbell Show* two years ago, which included REM's "Nightswimming", "Killer by Sea" and Annie Lennox's "Why".

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## significant shorts

## Driving ban for Princess of Wales's mother

Frances Shand Kydd, mother of the Princess of Wales, was banned from driving for a year and fined £400 yesterday after being found guilty of drink-driving.

Shand Kydd, 60, had more than two-and-a-half times the legal limit of alcohol in her blood when she was stopped in Shore Street, Oban, on 5 April. She had denied the charge. She was acquitted of failing to give a road-side breath test without reasonable cause, after a three-day trial at Oban Sheriff Court.

Sheriff William Dunlop told her that in giving her only the minimum ban, he was taking into account an unblemished 42-year driving record and "that a loss of a licence can mean more to some people than others". Shand Kydd had been upset by a letter on the day of her arrest, the court heard.

## Death school boy detained

A 15-year-old boy was ordered to be detained for three years at the Old Bailey for his part in the violence which led to the death of the headmaster Philip Lawrence.

A trivial incident of bugging between Christopher Gan and another boy in a corridor at Mr Lawrence's school, St George's, in Maida Vale, north London, led to a feud and Gan, a Filipino, threatened to take his friends to beat up the other boy.

A gang later attacked the boy. Mr Lawrence was stabbed to death by the gang leader, Learco Chindamo, when he went to help the victim. Gan was convicted of conspiring to cause grievous bodily harm.

## M25 pile-up

One person died and seven others were seriously injured in a pile-up on the M25 in Surrey.

## Pensioner murdered for 12 handguns

An 84-year-old man beaten and strangled by burglars was murdered for the collection of handguns he kept in his home, police said.

About 12, including a .33 calibre Smith and Wesson, and a number of antique guns, were taken from Kenneth Speakman's home in Ramsgate, Kent. They had been kept in secure cabinets in accordance with regulations. Ammunition was also taken. The dead man belonged to Ramsgate Gun Club and had held a firearms certificate for more than 50 years.

Most of the weapons were of a calibre which MPs this week voted to ban.

## 'Police wanted to kill suspect'

Police "were out to kill" Wayne Douglas as they "rained blows" on the suspected burglar, an inquest jury was told.

Patrick Doyle said the former postman, who died in custody just over an hour later, was repeatedly kicked and stamped on.

"They were out to kill him, that is the only way I can explain what happened that night," he told the hearing in Southwark, south London.

Mr Doyle said he was in his flat in Brixton, when he saw Mr Douglas, 25, confronting police in the street. He heard them shouting "put it down" and saw a knife thrown to the ground. Two officers then rushed him, pinned him to the ground and delivered five or six baton blows to his arms as he screamed in pain.

Mr Doyle went out and saw up to seven officers dragging Mr Douglas into the park and hitting him again. "They were raining blows on the boy with batons," he said. "Some of the officers were also stamping on him ... on his chest, arms, legs, back, head, everywhere."

The hearing was adjourned. *Jojo Moyes*

The former Prime Minister tells Tory rebels to reject Blair and says socialism is 'visibly stirring'

## Thatcher warns Euro-sceptics

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

Barness Thatcher last night rode to the rescue of the embattled Prime Minister by calling on the Euro-sceptic right wing to turn their attacks on Tony Blair over Europe.

The Prime Minister was threatened with a Government defeat by Labour and the Euro-sceptics over European Commission proposals which could undermine Britain's opt-out from the European single currency.

A row is expected in the Commons on Monday when MPs return to the House, threatening disruption of the Budget debate on Tuesday. Downing Street made it clear yesterday Mr Major was standing firm and refusing to allow an emergency debate before the Chancellor goes to the meeting of European finance ministers (Ecofin) on 2 December.

Almost six years to the day since she was challenged in the leadership election, Lady Thatcher told the Euro-sceptics, many of whom were her natural supporters, to reject Mr Blair's overtures and back Mr Major.

In withering attack on Mr Blair, Lady Thatcher used the rhetoric of the Cold War warrior to deliver her warning to the Tory Party that socialism was not dead, but only sleeping, and would be awakened if they gave it the chance by bringing down the Government.

Praising Mr Major for showing "persistence, imagination and skill" in taking forward her brand of Conservatism, Lady Thatcher said the Prime Minister had gained exemptions from the social chapter which Mr Blair would sign up to.

She rejected the Labour leader's admiration for her leadership. "It is flattering to learn that we are all Thatcherites now. In fact, the Road to Damascus has never been more congested..."

Mr Blair did not understand the philosophy behind her policies and could not put them into practice. "They would be blown off course, and the reefs of interventionism are no less dangerous, and the sirens of financial profligacy no less alluring, than they were in the past," she said.

"We have to appreciate the fact that socialism is not dead. It is not even asleep. It is visibly stirring." Significantly, the only other minister singled out for praise was the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, seen by many as the leading right-wing candidate for the leadership.

Her remarks in a long-planned lecture in memory of Sir Nicholas Ridley, one of her



Margaret Thatcher has come to the aid of her successor, John Major, as he faces a rebellion by backbench Euro-sceptics

supporters, are unlikely to damp down the full-scale revolt among Tory MPs.

Teresa Gorman, the Euro-sceptic Tory MP, said the Tory MPs were upset because they "smell a rat" about the possibility of the Chancellor agreeing to measures at the Ecofin meeting. They are demanding a debate before the end of next week. Labour helped to

whip up the expectations of a Government defeat by warning that it will seek to defeat the Government on the technical motion passing the documents from the European Commission which have caused the row.

The reports of the possibility that the Government could be brought down caused alarm bells to ring in Dublin, where ministers are both preparing for

the December summit as presidents of the European Union and trying to stop the Northern Ireland peace talks collapsing.

In spite of the threats by the Northampton North MP Tony Marlow, a Tory Euro-sceptic, to resign the whip, Tony Blair, the Labour leader, said he would not table a no-confidence motion on the Government until he believed Labour could win

it. Labour yesterday viewed that prospect as highly unlikely. But it could change if early by-elections in Barnsley East and Wirral South rob Mr Major of his majority.

The former chancellor and leading Euro-sceptic Norman Lamont said extending the debate before the Dublin summit to two days could provide a way out of the current impasse pro-

vided there was a proper discussion of the documents.

"I think in the interests of maintaining the unity of the Conservative Party in the run-up to the election, I really do think and I would plead with the Government, that it is essential that we do have a debate on something which is very important," he said on BBC radio.

John Redwood, the former leadership challenger, told a meeting in King's Lynn: "Parliament won the right to hold the executive to account more than three hundred years ago in the Civil War... I urge the Prime Minister to recognise the strength of Parliamentary feeling."

Mr Major, who spent the day in his home in Huntingdon preparing a speech for next week's Tory Party women's conference, will meet Sir Marcus Fox, the chairman of the 1922 Committee of Tory MPs early next week to hear their concerns about the Government's string of blunders.

## A month is a very long time in politics: countdown to the end of 17 years of Tory rule?

## Key dates for the crisis facing the Government

Tuesday 26 November - Chancellor's Budget statement

2 December - European finance ministers (Ecofin) attended by Kenneth Clarke

3 December - vote at the end of the Budget debate

December 4/5 - possible date for Government European debate on the 'adjustment of the House'

December 12 - John Major's one-seat majority could be wiped out if Labour wins the Barnsley East by-election

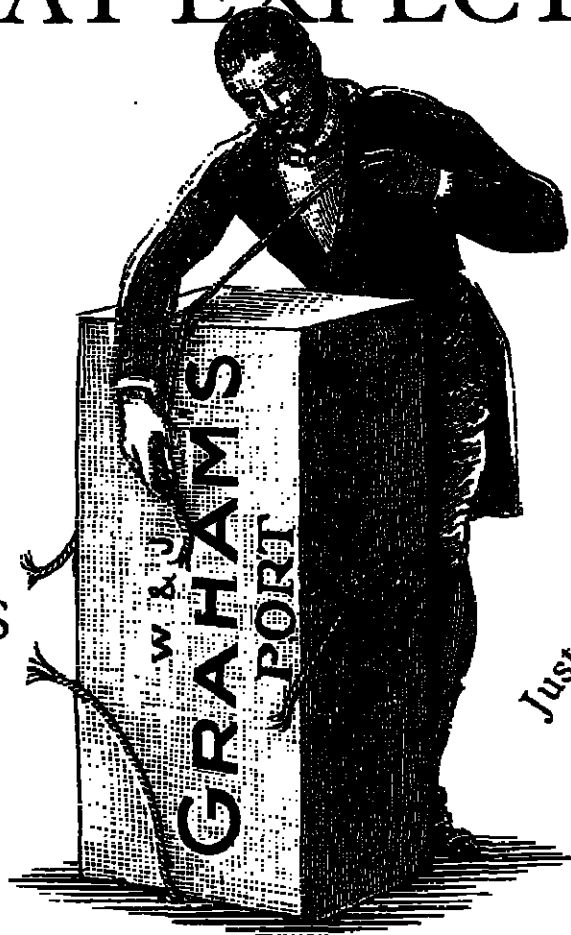
December 13-14 - Dublin summit. Major has to defend Britain's opt-out on the single currency.

December 16-17 - European agriculture ministers' meeting - possible beef deal for Ulster farmers.

December 19? - possible date for Tory Wirral South by-election - defeat would put the Tories in a minority for the first time since 1979.

December 26 - Boxing Day; *The Sun* says it could be election day; even the Euro-sceptics dismissed such speculation as 'extravagant'.

## GRRREAT EXPECTATIONS

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## Keats exam is not a thing of beauty

Judith Judd  
Education Editor

Three senior English examiners have resigned because they believe new exam rules are completely unsuitable for marking questions on Keats' concept of beauty.

Another eight examiners say they have been effectively suspended by an exam board until they agree to sign an agreement to comply with the new code of practice.

The protesters, all examiners for the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board which sets exams for many of the top public schools, say that the rules penalise gifted candidates who show originality and flair.

They are also concerned that the exam will be unfair because fewer individual scripts will be seen by examiners.

A meeting of the eight due to take place last weekend to set next year's English exam was cancelled by the board.

Government exam advisers from the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority and inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education are un-

derstood to have attacked the marking of this year's English A-level by the rebellious 11 because they failed to follow the revised code of practice.

Dr John Saunders, chief examiner in English, who has resigned, said the code assumed that English was "something of a science", that it was possible to give a "right" mark in English and that examiners could be programmed so that they would agree on a right mark.

Instead, he said, even well-trained examiners were likely to "disagree by up to 5 per cent on their marks for most essays and by up to 25 per cent or more on essays which are unfamiliar in form and attitude."

He added that brilliant candidates from schools such as Winchester who wrote very short answers would be penalised under the system. The examiners argue that different subjects need different codes.

Dr Brian Martin, one of the eight who has not resigned, said: "How can the same code of practice be applied to marking a physics exam and to marking a literature exam, for example the marking a question which asks about Keats' con-

ception of beauty in his poetry, and to a question about velocity, co-ordinates and vectors?"

The dispute has been further complicated by the ruling that the papers in the board's summer English literature A-Level should be marked as four modules or separate components, even though most candidates thought they were taking a traditional course with one final exam.

Dr Saunders and his colleagues felt that this was unfair on able candidates who tend to do better on non-modular courses.

The exam board secretary, said in a letter to one of the examiners: "I cannot accept that advanced level English cannot be examined in accordance with the code of practice, not least because all the other GCSE exam boards do this."

A spokesman for the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority said: "All the boards have signed up to the code of practice. We are not aware that there is any problem with any aspect of the code of practice. We absolutely reject the examiners' reasons for their actions."

Leading article, page 21



# The Germans left behind more than a few concrete bunkers in the Channel Islands, writes Jojo Moyes

## How Jersey's Nazi children disappeared

Mrs L. was charged with having, on April 5, given birth to a child, sex unknown, and with having criminally and voluntarily concealed the body in a kitchen stove... The accused's husband, who was serving in HM forces, was now in Italy. The accused had not heard from her husband for 16 months but had written to her husband giving full details of the affair.  
*The Jersey Evening Post, 6 June 1945*

The Westway Crèche was once a prominent feature in the neatly manicured streets of St Helier, Jersey. But there are no references to it in the public library, and the trust that ran it is now chiefly remembered as a donor of children's shoes. The crèche, like the children it once housed, has become part of Jersey's unspoken, and controversial history.

Records released this week by the Public Records Office suggest that as many as 900 half-German babies were born to Jersey women during the occupation. The fierce denials of this fact in Jersey show that 50 years on, some wounds have not yet healed.

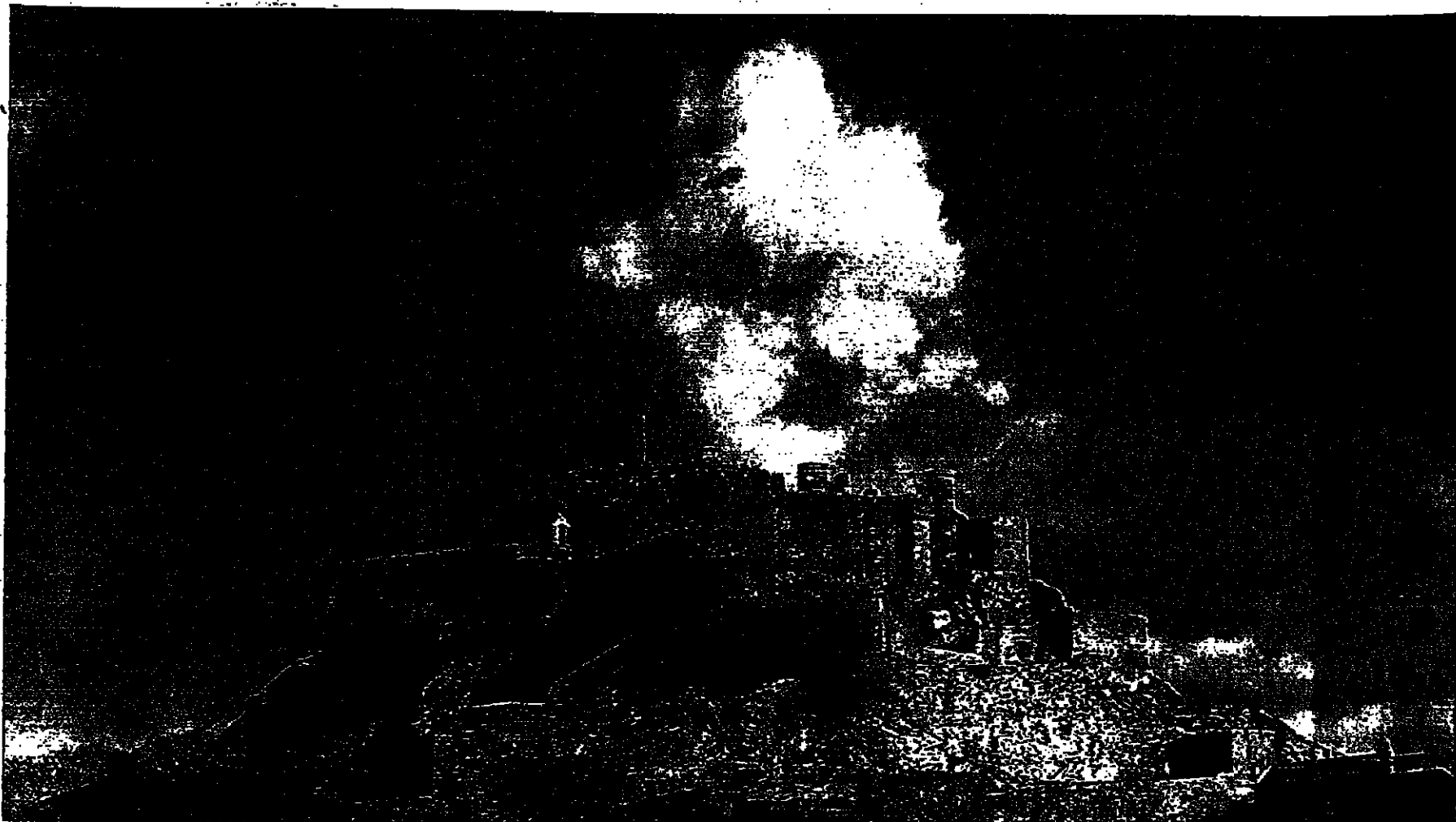
The children themselves – the only people who could shed light on the true figure – are unlikely to answer. They have "disappeared", or are carefully protected by the few remaining people who know their parentage.

Many residents who are old enough to remember, will tell you that such children were their neighbours, or at their school. But they will not tell you their names. Most will tell you that the issue "should be left well alone".

One local reporter who has covered occupation stories for many years said it was not something she would pursue strongly. "We have to live here, don't we?"

She complained that the new illegitimacy figures, which largely comprised the evidence of anonymous informants, had been given a "quasi-credibility". Jersey residents say 900 is "hugous" and cite a figure of 174 births for whole occupation period.

But census reports for the island show that while the annual birth rate dropped dramatically from the 70s



Island fortress: castles like Mont Orgueil on the Jersey coast kept Napoleon's forces at bay but were no defence against the Nazis

Photograph: Robert

to the 400s at the start of the war, it began to creep up during the German occupation. In 1944 it reached 527.

So where are the children, most of whom would now be in middle age? Anne Herod, of the Jersey's Children's Department, said the lack of an adoption law until 1947 left the fate of many of the children undocumented. While many began life in the Westway Crèche – the newly-released papers refer to it as being "full up with those little bastards" – access to their files is restricted "as many of the people are

still alive".

"Many of them grew up with other families or may have been subsequently adopted. I think on the whole the children were assimilated," she said.

Under Jersey law, any child born to a married woman had to be registered as her husband's. Unmarried women simply left the name of the father blank. In many cases, she said, the child was unlikely to know of its German heritage. The only clue, "one or two with rather Aryan Christian names," she said.

Joe Miére, former curator of the

German Underground Hospital Museum, is widely considered to be the island's "occupation expert". He is still in touch with some women who had babies by German soldiers, many of whom left the island after the liberation. In one case, he has met the child, now a middle-aged man. But he says of the women: "They talk to me because they know I won't give their names away."

The issue of "Jerrybags" – local women who slept with Germans – is still guaranteed to heighten feelings. James McScown, curator of the Underground Museum, said he had

wept tears of anger at the latest "exaggerated" claims that most Jersey women slept with Germans.

"This 70 percent thing – it's an insult to our sisters and mothers. And so what if they had? It's not as if the British army didn't do the same wherever they were."

One woman who fell in love with a Nazi deserter, still, at age 70, declines to be named publicly. "Alice" is now married with children and still lives in Jersey. Joe Miére was held in a cell next to the German soldier and remembers her waving a "grubby white handkerchief" as he was led

off for execution.

Alice's own death sentence was commuted to 10 years imprisonment. The Bailiff's plea on her behalf reads: "A young woman in love does not always weigh the consequences of her deeds when they are decided by what she believes – however wrongly – to be the welfare of her lover."

But many Jersey residents were not as understanding. Mr Miére remembers seeing mobs chasing a naked and bleeding "Jerrybag" through the street. Others were simply ostracised.

## Plan to make master race

Jojo Moyes and Elizabeth Wine

Children born during the Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands narrowly escaped being transported to Germany as part of a programme to produce a master race, a historian has claimed.

Joe Miére, former curator of Jersey's German Underground Hospital, says that documents from sources across Europe show that a unit from an elite SS squad visited shortly before D-Day to assess the "racial suitability" of 80 children born illegitimately to Jersey mothers.

The visit was part of the Lebensborn programme initiated by Heinrich Himmler, which produced some 7,500 children. Officers were ordered to father "perfect Aryans" in special Lebensborn homes, while in occupied countries suitable children were stolen to improve future blood stocks.

Documents dated 24 May 1944 addressed to the RuSHA (racial unit) headquarters in Berlin state: "Since the occupation of the Channel Islands by German forces, 80 children have been born whose fathers are unquestionably members of the German occupying forces... The situation of these unmarried mothers is very bad indeed."

Mr Miére, who has studied the occupation for more than 50 years, said many mothers did in fact move to Germany.

Michael Leapman, co-author of the book *Master Race*, about the Lebensborn programme, said that the new documents showed that even at the late stage of the war, the Nazis were still being selective. "Because Himmler admired British stock the Germans were looking to increase their population by taking illegitimate children fathered by German soldiers. Whether these children had a lucky escape or not I don't know."

## BMA urged ban on use of dead husband's sperm

Patricia Wynn Davies  
Legal Affairs Editor

The British Medical Association's ethics committee urged the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to reject Diane Blood's bid to have a baby using her dead husband's sperm, it emerged yesterday.

In an unsolicited letter to the authority's chairwoman, Ruth Deech, prior to Thursday night's decision to confirm the ban on the treatment either here or abroad, the committee's chairman, Dr Stuart Horner, suggested that Stephen Blood, the husband, had not properly thought through the full implications of a child being created after his death.

Mrs Blood has claimed throughout that the legal requirement for written consent – preceded by an opportunity for counselling – had been applied too inflexibly in her case because she and her husband had previously discussed artificial insemination after death.

But giving its reasons for refusing to use its discretionary powers last night, the authority said in a statement: "There is a clear requirement for the written and effective consent of a man after he has had the opportunity to receive counselling and after he has had a proper opportunity to consider the implications of a posthumous birth."

Dr Horner's letter, dated



Diane Blood: "Very, very upset" over the contents of the BMA ethics-committee letter to the HFEA

Photograph: PA

Tuesday, said that informed rather than written consent was the real issue. "We believe that the doctrine of informed consent, which is central to medical ethics, must not be eroded," he wrote. "Ethically, whether the consent is in writing or given orally is ir-

relevant. The essential issue is the quality of consent... it appears [Mr Blood] made a passing comment whose validity is difficult to evaluate in retrospect."

The letter added that since it was unacceptable to use the sperm without consent in this

country, it was equally unacceptable for it to be used abroad.

Paul Plant, co-ordinator of the Stephen Blood Baby Appeal, said: "Diane is disgusted and very, very upset about these comments. This gentleman is doubting... her evidence. He should have ensured he was in possession of all the facts."

Mrs Blood was facing a fresh crisis yesterday as her supporters said that £50,000, in addition to £15,000 already received in donations, was urgently needed for a court appeal in January.

The authority confirmed that the frozen sperm, now 18 months old but with a shelf-life of 30 years, would continue to be safely stored until all legal avenues had been exhausted.

The fertility expert Lord Winston, a Labour peer, introduced a backbench bill this week to amend the law – but this is unlikely to make progress within the life of this parliament without Government backing. He said yesterday that ethics were never fixed and the BMA committee had "let Mrs Blood down".

Professor Jack Scarisbrick, chairman of the anti-abortion group Life, said: "Many will sympathise with Mrs Blood. But children should not be used as a way of coping with bereavement or honouring a dead spouse."

The Stephen Blood Baby Appeal can be contacted on 0121-643 4636.



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## Rugby clubs hire 12-year-olds in rush to professionalism

Ian Burrell

Parents and sports teachers are alarmed that professional rugby clubs are approaching children as young as 12 with written contracts.

Swept along by the new pressures of the professional game, clubs are trying to spot the pre-pubescent boys who will grow up to turn down like Brian Moore the next Jonah Lomu.

Schoolboys are being offered free kit, medical insurance, and promised sponsored university places – and payments of £500 a game. Teachers believe youngsters are being tempted to jettison their studies and long-term careers.

The trend has resulted from the arrival of professionalism in

rugby union along with the setting up of the new Super League in Rugby League.

The two codes are involved in a race to sign up new schoolboy talent. Children must sign contracts promising not to play without the permission of the clubs.

Senior rugby players warned last night that salaries in the game were only a fraction of those paid to top soccer players and could not provide long-term financial security.

Richard Moon, secretary of the Rugby Union Players' Association (Rupa), said: "We have been approached by quite a few parents and schoolteachers. In some cases the clubs have been offering the entire school 15 in-

centives to join. Clubs are targeting them at a young age so that they don't slip out of their grasp, but schoolchildren are potentially so vulnerable and they may see stars in their eyes and follow that path to the exclusion of all else."

Rupa has shared its fears about schoolboy contracts with the Rugby Football Union, based at Twickenham, where England begin their international season against Italy today.

David Rose, the RFU's youth development officer for the North Midlands, is also concerned. He said: "Clubs are saying to youngsters: 'We want you to sign for two or three years and you cannot play any other rugby without our permission.'"

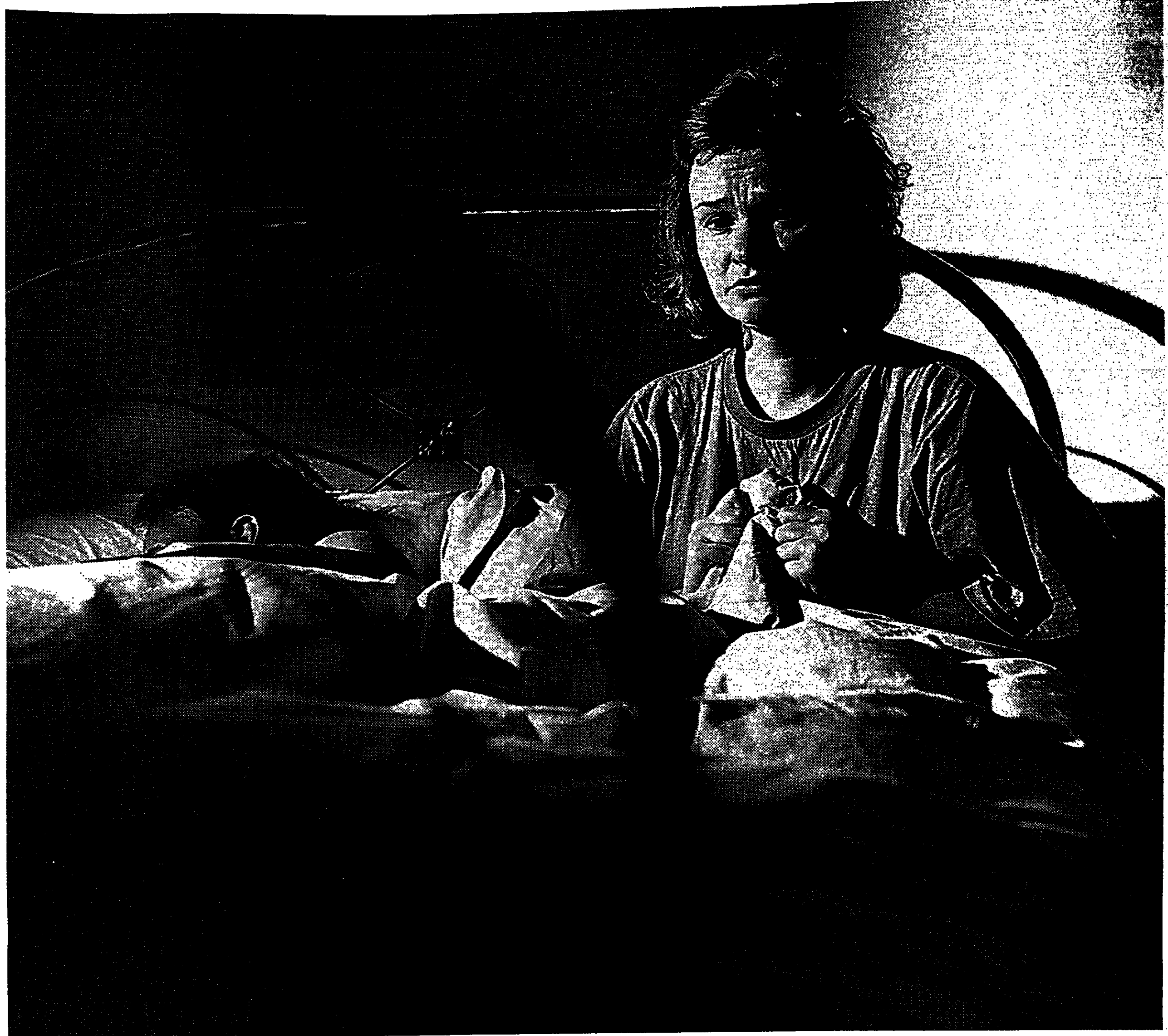
"Many parents are very concerned, but some dads, who are

keen for their sons to progress, could be taken in by all the promises."

Youngsters have traditionally been encouraged to learn the rudiments of the game in mini-rugby and progress through school teams to a university fifteen or a local amateur club side. Only then would the major clubs take interest.

In rugby league, the setting up of a new Super League has upped the stakes in signing schools talent. Bill Chad, secretary of the Rugby League Professional Players' Association, said 12-year-olds were now being signed up to major clubs. "If a schoolboy is not signed by the age of 14 they might see themselves as a failure and lose interest in the game," he said.





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THE INDEPENDENT

Capital classics

## Lc

Louise Jury

A plan to give more powers to streets of the cap prompted by the loughs to boost the film industry.

In a radical reveal don's notorious re being uncooperative posals would give l for the first time to want to help film c

A Bill being pres liament this month them the right to suspend parking b

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Louise Jury

James Bond has be Britain after swift w ners. Film-mak businessmen found for the legendary s

The production l eighteenth advet secret agent 007 in the 12-acre site in H on Tuesday.

Fears had grown Bond movie might made abroad after den studios in He where the seven Goldeneye, was n booked for the mak new Star Wars epi

But Fon Prode Bond film producer Film Link, the coun moting unit, co-o scouring the region alternative and di disused site at the Frogmore.

Barbara Broecoh ter of the late Jame ducer Cubby Br

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Capital classics: (Left to right) *The Ladykillers* (1955), an Ealing comedy starring Alec Guinness; *Alfie* (1966) with Michael Caine as a Cockney rogue; and *Mrs Dalloway*, yet to be released. All were shot in Camden, north London

## London calling for the world's film-makers

Louise Jury

A plan to give movie-makers more powers to film on the streets of the capital is being promoted by the London boroughs to boost the burgeoning film industry.

In a radical reversal of London's notorious reputation for being uncooperative, the proposals would give legal backing for the first time to councils who want to help film crews.

A Bill being presented to Parliament this month would give them the right to close roads, suspend parking bays and take

other measures on the streets as necessary in return for a "reasonable" fee.

The London Film Commission, which is backing the plans, believes that formalising arrangements which are already widespread will make the capital even more attractive as a location.

In the past, while many boroughs have worked hard to be flexible, some have proved cautious because of the risk of legal action by disgruntled

residents or businesses. However, some film-makers are already anxious that giving councils the right to charge will add to costs and force productions to go elsewhere.

The measures are part of the London Local Authorities Bill, a private Bill promoted by the Association of London Government (ALG). It will be presented to Parliament at the end of the month, but is likely to take up to two years to become law.

Ian Keating, the ALG's parliamentary officer, said the measures were not a way for councils to make money, but would help all concerned.

"It will give boroughs an incentive to take trouble to help, and it will require people to give notice if they're going to film, even if they're not going to do something like close a road."

Chris Waterman, the ALG's arts officer, added: "What we're trying to do is make sure that London is film-friendly."

Warner Brothers have new studios planned for Hillingdon, west London, Mr Waterman said. There was also the possibility of another studio at the Arsenal in Woolwich, south-east London, and the new Star Wars trilogy is being made at the Leavesden former aerodrome site in Hertfordshire. He added: "We want to help provide the infrastructure for these studios."

Christabel Albery, of the London Film Commission, said: "Virtually all boroughs were

charging anyway, but what this Bill does is make these charges reasonable. A reasonable charge is one that covers the cost of what the borough has done, like rubbish collection. This is more an enabling piece of legislation than regulatory legislation."

But John Hardy, who acts as a consultant for film-makers, said: "Everyone has as much right to be on the highway as anyone else provided they don't cause a nuisance and hazard. No

other business - British Gas, Telecom - is charged just for being there."

"Paying will be a retrograde step. At the moment, film-makers have to be on best behaviour because you've got to get the residents on your side. Once a crew has started paying, they're going to say, 'We've paid for this. More confrontation will result.'"

Chris Wheeldon, who is chairman of the Location Managers' Guild, said the legislation

could cause problems for smaller productions.

"The key is no one has a very clear idea of what is a realistic fee. Everybody thinks of £1,000 a day, but a lot of production companies operate on a quarter of that or less. All of a sudden you can't afford to make stuff any more."

Among films being made in the capital at present are *Atlantis*, from the book by Julian Barnes, with Emily Watson, the star of *Breaking The Waves*, and *Romany and Rejection*, with John Hannah and Frank Finlay.

## England is forever as Bond stays at home

Louise Jury

James Bond has been saved for Britain after swift work by planners, film-makers and businessmen found a new home for the legendary secret agent.

The production team for the eighteenth adventure with secret agent 007 moved on to the 12-acre site in Hertfordshire, on Tuesday.

Fears had grown that the next Bond movie might have to be made abroad after the Leavesden studios in Hertfordshire, where the seventeenth film, *Goldeneye*, was made, were booked for the making of three new *Star Wars* epics.

But Eon Productions, the Bond film producers, and Herts Film Link, the county's film-promoting unit, co-operated on scouring the region to find an alternative and discovered a disused site at the village of Frogmore.

Barbara Broccoli, the daughter of the late James Bond producer Cubby Broccoli, and



Brosnan: Starting new 007 film in Britain in February.

Michael Wilson, his stepson, visited the site 10 days ago, consultations were held with residents and the local authority over last weekend and outline planning permission was granted by St Albans Council on Monday. Shooting, with Pierce Brosnan as Bond, is now sched-

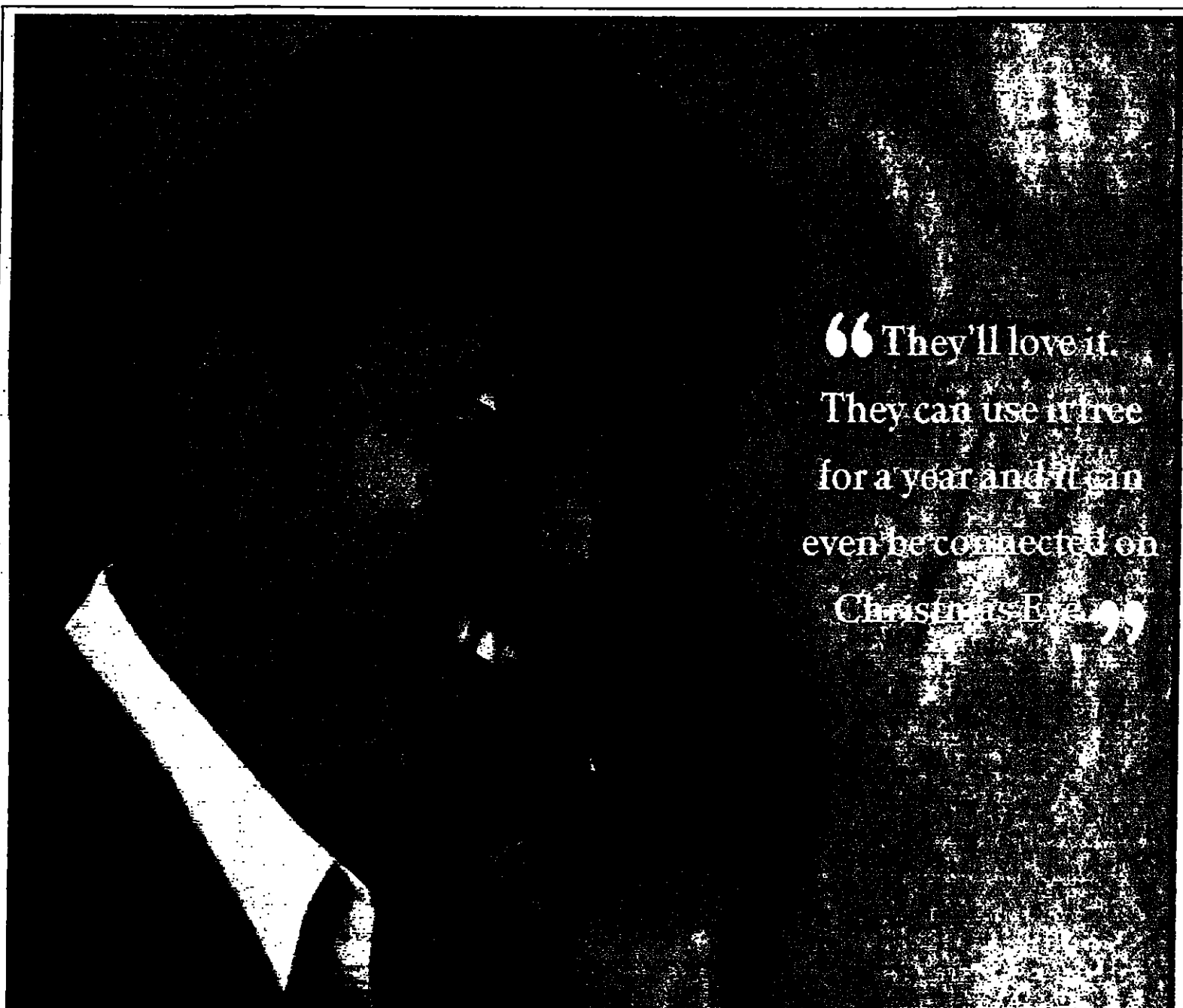
uled to start in February. Gordon Arnell, of Eon, said they were delighted. "It's always been American money, but Bond is a very British subject. It always worked well for the Broccoli family here."

Although one film was filmed substantially in France and another in Mexico, British crews were acknowledged world experts and a base near London gave ready access to that expertise. "Over 30 years we have two or three generations of technicians who have come to work on the Bonds," Mr Arnell said.

Chris Holt, of Herts Film Link, said: "If everyone wants it to happen and you have the right people behind it and the drive, you can do these things."

"We all wanted it for Britain. It will be a good boost for our local economy and great kudos."

Eon had accounts with around 200 small local suppliers when they were making *Goldeneye*.



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## news

# Truckers slow France to a snail's pace

1,000 British lorries trapped by barricades in dispute over working hours

James Cusick  
Calais

Up to 1,000 British lorries, many with perishable cargoes, have been caught up in a blockade of roads and motorways throughout France by 10,000 angry French lorry drivers.

The protest over working conditions, now in its fifth day, shows no sign of easing. Many regions throughout France are suffering from lengthy tailbacks. French drivers, co-ordinated by CB radios and mobile phones, are using a tactic called "l'escargot", driving at snail's pace. The demonstrations have already led to petrol stations running out. Many in the worst hit areas in the north were yesterday already displaying *Pas de Gas* (no petrol or oil) signs.

Although there have been sporadic outbreaks of violence



Jam today: Lorry drivers are deliberately going out of their way to cause what is said to be the worst traffic chaos in France since 1968

Photograph: Christophe Ena/PA

between French drivers and their British counterparts caught up in the dispute, British Embassy and consulate officials have reached agreement reached for special cases. French drivers allowed a po-

tential bone marrow donor to make his way clear of one blockade. A driver whose son was with him was yesterday allowed out of another blockade to allow the youngster to receive urgent treatment for asthma.

Embassy officials have helped some British drivers who have simply run out of cash. Talks between the lorry drivers' union and the government broke down yesterday. Although there were slim hopes

that they would be resumed over the weekend, there seemed little chance of the dispute, whose origins go back to 7 November, ending quickly. Under French law lorries are not allowed to begin their

journey between 10pm on Saturday and 10pm on Sunday. However, it is understood that the French transport ministry may be prepared to relax this rule if an agreement is reached within the next 24 hours. The

main grievance of the dispute is over promises going back to 1994 to drivers to phase in reduced working hours (to 56 hours per week), increase waiting time payments, and for retirement at 55.

The apparent failure of the French Government to deliver for the drivers who work essentially in the private sector has meant them retaliating with a quick, well co-ordinated protest. The chaos caused is believed to

be the worst to hit the French roads network since the national protests of May 1968.

A paralysis of normal traffic has been one tactic. The other tactic has been to blockade petrol facilities especially at Bordeaux. Many petrol stations in Northern France are expected to run dry throughout the weekend. The situation in north west France is, according to one official, "critical".

From Bordeaux travelling north in a clockwise direction there are fixed lorry blockades at Nantes, Rennes, Caen, Rouen, Strasbourg, Riom, Chavanay, Avignon and Toulouse. At other cities traffic, although moving, is deliberately being controlled to go very, very slow. These include Dijon, Chalon, Clermont, Lyon and Lille.

There have also been barricades at Rungis on the outskirts of Paris, and at St Pierre in the Ile de France region.

At Calais, already economically hit by the fire in the tunnel, the normal busy freight car parks for the ferries looked deserted yesterday. One English driver from Canterbury said his journey to Calais had been a "two-day nightmare".

At Dover, police said that despite the potential for chaos on the other side of the Channel, lorry drivers still appeared to be taking the risk of travelling to France.

## Eurotunnel losing £1m a day

French judicial officials inspecting the burned-out wreckage of five freight wagons still left inside the Channel tunnel will continue their examinations over the weekend, writes James Cusick.

With the Inter-Governmental Safety Commission suspending its discussions in Calais for the weekend, talks between the commission and representatives from Eurotunnel will resume on Monday. Yesterday, senior Eurotunnel officials met in Paris to discuss strategy for next week when they continue attempts to persuade the commission that services should be allowed to restart.

The key problem, according to Eurotunnel sources, is that the severe damage sustained to one of the two main tunnels rules out putting a "safety case" for the tunnel's operations.

For a quick resumption of either Eurostar's passenger train service or the Le Shuttle car train, Eurotunnel may need to place two trains in the damaged tunnel on stand-by at either side of the main damaged area to accommodate any future accident and the subsequent need for an emergency evacuation.

Having insisted that the loss of no lives meant their safety regime functioned as planned, Eurotunnel has placed itself in

no position to demand that safety procedures now be over-ridden to accommodate a quick return of normal services - and the return of revenue.

Over the weekend, the wreckage of the five remaining freight wagons will be separated to allow them to be brought out of the tunnel in a state that will allow engineers to continue a forensic evaluation of how the fire started. As with any accident on this scale, the inquiry teams will be expected to both discover cause and deliver advice on future precautions.

With Eurotunnel losing £1m a day and still facing the unquantifiable task of recapturing public confidence, the prospect of a long drawn-out inquiry will be a further blow.

Whether the safety commission will allow the company to continue using the lattice freight wagons is now being seen as crucial to short-term economic viability. Before the fire, Eurotunnel's numerous banks which financed its mounting debts had been in discussion over a £4.1bn refinancing package. If the commission outlaws the open wagons and demands a redesigned freight service - as fire experts had previously demanded - the bill for new wagons will be an extra worry for the banks.



Due to the temporary closure of the Channel Tunnel, Eurostar regrets that all services (including Eurostar Link trains) continue to be suspended until further notice.

Customers holding tickets will be fully refunded or offered alternative booking dates, regardless of ticket type. New or amended bookings cannot currently be made for travel to be taken before 1 December 1996.

Eurostar is ready to resume services and bookings as soon as the authorities approve the re-opening of the Channel Tunnel to Eurostar trains.

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## news



Opening time: A boatman, Graham Horton, with the paddle gear of new lockgates for the Grand Union Canal as they are taken from Foxton, Leicestershire, to Watford Locks near Daventry. The gates, built in traditional manner by the canal's managers, British Waterways, weigh two tonnes each and are 14ft high. Photograph: Rui Vieira

## Accident victims must pay more

Police to charge 1,000 per cent more for official reports

Ian Burrell

Commercially-minded police forces have increased their charges for official reports supplied to road accident victims by more than 1,000 per cent.

At the same time NHS trusts are demanding more than £100 for medical records which by law should cost £10 plus a photocopying and postage fee.

Lawyers representing the victims said last week that the developments were a direct result of Treasury pressure on police forces and NHS trusts to become more cost-effective.

They fear the charges will encourage insurance companies to contest personal injury claims knowing that it is harder for clients to get the evidence they require.

One victim of a serious road accident in Bristol was made to pay £650 for a police accident report which until recently would have cost £48.

Ian Walker, of solicitors Russell, Jones and Walker, said the report had been "absolutely vital" to his client's case and that he had no option but to pay the Avon and Somerset police.

He said: "Forces are deciding that there's money to be made here. They say, 'If we have done a specialist investigation report you will have to pay us a commercial fee for it.' This is something the police do as part of their normal functions of investigating road accidents. They have done the work anyway but have decided that, with money being tight, this is a good way to make some more."

Until the increased charges, forces would supply expert accident reports, along with police notebook records from the scene of the accident and statements from witnesses, for a standard fee of £48.

The police accident investigator, who examines the scene of a crash to see if criminal proceedings should be brought, is able to determine the speed and direction of vehicles involved using mathematical formulae, measurements and photographs of the scene.

The police report can be crucial to a road accident victim claiming for a personal injury for which the insurance company disputes liability. The Association of Personal Injury

Lawyers has produced a report citing 22 trusts and hospitals which it claims are overcharging for records.

Oxfordshire Health Services charges £1 a page for copies of the medical records it holds.

Aintree Hospitals, in Liverpool, charges a standard fee of £75 plus 25p a copy, for records.

Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton healthcare trusts, in London, attempted to charge £50 for records but reduced the fee to £10 when threatened with legal action.

Kerry Underwood, a solicitor based in St Albans, Herts, said: "People are being charged exorbitant sums to obtain their records when they have had to pay for the treatment and the records through tax contributions in the first place."

Trusts are often unwilling to supply health records to solicitors if they fear the information is likely to be used in litigation

People are being asked exorbitant fees for work that they have already paid for

against them. Paul Balen, of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers, said it was "outrageous" that trusts were "openly flouting the law" by breaching the Access to Health Records Act 1991 which requires them to submit records for £10 plus photocopying and postage.

"We need the Department of Health to tell the trusts that this is unlawful."

Derek Day, deputy director of the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts, said: "Trusts have been costing out their services as part of their independent status. We would advise members to make sure that what they are doing is within the law."

The Department of Health says it is "trying to resolve the problem", while the Home Office said individual police forces were entitled to charge what they thought appropriate for specialist services.

## Test-tube baby chances halved for over-35s

Liz Hunt  
Health Editor

report in today's issue of *The Lancet*.

Women who had previously been pregnant had a better chance of success than those who had never conceived, and this effect was stronger where there had been a live birth and strongest of all in those who had had a child by IVF.

The use of donor eggs, in place of eggs removed from the ovaries of the woman undergoing treatment, significantly improved the chances of success in women over 29 but diminished with age. This is thought to be due to the decreasing "receptivity" of the womb lining for a fertilised egg.

Professor Templeton said that the cause of infertility did not appear to influence the outcome but the chances of pregnancy fell with each failed cycle of treatment: "We found that the best possibility of success is in the first cycle of IVF treatment and that there is a significant negative effect with increasing number of attempts thereafter."

The live birth rate was better for women with unexplained infertility than for those in whom tubal disease (blockage, inflammation and so on of the Fallopian tubes) had been diagnosed.

Overall, 36,961 IVF cycles (70 per cent of all those registered) between August 1991 and April 1994) in 26,389 women were investigated. Almost three-quarters of the women had one treatment cycle; one-fifth had two, and 8 per cent more than two. A further group of 1,416 IVF cycles using donated eggs were included in the study.

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# Inside, an elephants' parade will caper alongside the Miss World finalists; outside they will be torching themselves



Asian queen: Reita Faria, Indian winner of Miss World in 1966, when her victory was uncontroversial

## Faded pin-up in search of an admirer

Ian Burrell

Like Baby Doc Duvalier of Haiti and General Manuel Noriega of Panama before her, Miss World treks from continent to continent as a refugee in search of a friendly home.

A 45-year-old who has known better times, she arrives in each new port clutching her baggage of swimsuits and singbacks and provokes an inevitable outcry of protest.

Born in England in 1951, Miss World once wore her crown with pride. Then came the revolution of political correctness and her palace was destroyed. She was cast out and denounced as anachronistic, self-indulgent and tasteless.

"In reverse order..." are the famous words of Eric Morley, who with his wife Julia, created the contest - as the winner is crowned, and the international beauty pageant is indeed in retreat. Until recently she was based in Bophuthatswana where she attracted controversy by posing for photographs in poverty-stricken villages as part of Operation Hunger.

This year, she has moved on to Bangalore, where she has united right-wing politicians with feminist groups in their anger at the perceived slur on their culture that she represents.

Tomorrow, as Miss World preens herself at a sumptuous event at the Chinaswamy cricket club, groups of Indian women are planning to set light to themselves in protest. One man in a southern Indian city has already burnt himself alive while shouting anti-Miss World slogans.

According to Julia Morley,

Miss World is not interested in the political arena. But that has not stopped her becoming embroiled in endless international incidents over apartheid, world hunger, divorce, unmarried motherhood and the Jewish-Arab peace accord. Now she has apparently undermined the morals of an entire subcontinent.

Eric Morley was a publicity salesman for Mecca Dancing when he dreamed up the formula for the Festival of Britain in 1951. The contest spent 18 years at the Lyceum, Aldwych, 20 years at the Royal Albert Hall, and a brief spell at the Palladium before leaving London to go into exile in 1990. Since then Miss World has been like a former West End star performing at the end of the pier.

Yet the Morleys are not unhappy. In the glory days, Miss World would take to the stage for next to nothing, content with the adoration of her public watching the live coverage beamed round the globe by the BBC. But she has become increasingly commercial. Satellite channels will pay good money for the rights to film the event which once attracted a British audience of 27.5 million. International airlines sponsor the contest and businesses are encouraged to turn it into an international trade fair. This year there will be a worldwide audience of 7.5 billion.

But Miss World is running out of safe havens. As the English feminists flour-bombed her in 1972, so their Indian sisters have turned on her in 1996. She will not get involved, say her creators. She is not interested in politics or controversies. So where will she head next? Iran?

Jan McGirk  
New Delhi

Thousands of security guards have been recruited in an attempt to prevent disruption of tonight's Miss World contest in Bangalore by angry feminists, some of whom are threatening to set fire to themselves.

Police are hunting for KN Shashikala, the stocky Bengali karate black-belt who started the controversy three months ago when she organised students into a group of "vigilant women against indecent exposure", and filed a petition to ban the contest. When India won in 1966 and again two years ago, there were no protests.

However, her agitation spurred the organisers into retreat, and the swimsuit section was diverted to the Seychelles. The mathematics graduate, who is in her 20s, vanished yesterday, probably fearing arrest.

Earlier this week, a 25-year-old student from the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu,

torched himself to death in protest against the contest, held last year in Sun City, South Africa. Police also found four bombs planted at contest sites.

Unfazed, Judge RP Sethi ruled that the pageant could continue, providing that no indecent exposure, nudity, or obscenity takes place. A chorus line of 16 elephants will caper alongside the 89 leggy semi-finalists as the show is broadcast live to 115 nations.

Unseasonable rain threatens to make both the competition and the fiery protest fizzle out. Ticket sales have not helped. The Sultan of Brunei ordered 200 tickets for the grand finale, but nearly half of the cheaper seats remain unsold at the Chinaswamy Stadium. A crowd of just 10,000 is expected along with the mob which will gather outside for the feminists' mock-pageant.

Nearby loom enormous 20ft cardboard cut-outs of the contest's main organiser, the Hindi star Amitabh Bachchan. He

is naked, with his hands cupping his genitals. One of the judges, the actor Oliver Reed, seemed quite happy to be left off.

Julia Morley, who runs the contest with her husband said: "We make money on beauty and spend it on the ugly face of the world. That's our purpose and protest will not deter us."

Some Indians view the contest as a Trojan horse for the multi-nationals who have been eyeing India's burgeoning middle-class as an untapped market. And although feminists resent the display of flesh, more traditional women decry the imposition of Western ideals of beauty on an ancient culture.

India has sent participants to beauty pageants for the past 30 years, and the nation was almost smug with self-congratulation in 1994 when it won Miss Universe and Miss World. The latter, Ashwariya Rai, is too yellow to brave the protesters and judge tonight's pageant. But she's got a valid doctor's excuse: she is suffering from jaundice.



Turning up the heat: Protesters burning effigies of Miss World in India

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## Doctor Who fan fiction

Microsoft Encarta 97 Encyclopedia



## news

## Phil is less than Cool as he joins the celebrities' masquerade



Look this way: Phil Cool appearing between his mask (left) and Jimmy Tarbuck's in an exhibition of more than 500 painted by celebrities at the Royal Festival Hall, South Bank, in London yesterday. An auction of 150 masks in aid of the Prince's Trust charity for young people will be held at the hall next Thursday. Photograph: Keith Dobney

Cheltenham College accused of 19th-century work practices

## Removal of head buys peace at school

Fran Abrams  
Education Correspondent

The head of Cheltenham College has resigned despite a parents' campaign to prevent his removal from the school by governors. Peter Wilkes has decided to leave the public school next summer even though an independent inquiry found that attempts to remove him had breached both natural justice and employment law. The inquiry's report also accused the school of having "19th century" employment practices.

Mr Wilkes said yesterday that he was leaving to prevent the school from tearing itself apart. A compromise agreement between parents and governors at Cheltenham is expected to be struck today. Parents had demanded that Mr Wilkes should stay, that several of the governors should go, and that parents should be given seats on the governing body.

The president of the body, Nigel Farrow, resigned last week. Others may go in a restructuring exercise as part of the peace deal now being struck.

Mr Wilkes was asked to resign after the school slipped from 147th to 205th in A-level league tables. The governors, who include General Sir John Waters, former deputy supreme allied commander Europe and Sir Michael Perry, chairman of Unilever, also criticised his managerial style and his relationships with senior staff.

However, a meeting of parents voted by 620 to seven in favour of Mr Wilkes' reinstatement and of the resignation of the school council (governors). They were also angry that they were initially given no explanation of the head's dismissal.

The case has highlighted the power of governors in private schools. All state schools are required to have elected parents on their governing bodies but independent schools are not. Cheltenham parents, who pay fees of around £12,000 a year, say they should be told more about what is going on.

An independent inquiry into the dispute by Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Cheltenham-based Universities and Colleges Admissions Service,

was presented to governors last week. It said the management of independent schools should be open to public scrutiny, if only to ensure that justice was seen to be done.

Mr Higgins wrote: "It is expected in the 1990s that the normal rules of natural justice, not to mention employment legislation, are observed. It is my view that in this case neither was observed. It seems ironic that a council which is looking for a dynamic leader to take the college into the 21st century... can still be operating employment practices which were perhaps more common in the 19th century."

Mr Wilkes said it was in the best interests of the school that he should not seek reinstatement.



Sir Michael Perry: Critic of head's management style

ment. "Parents have been mounting a wonderful campaign to have me reinstated. While I hated the idea of letting down my loyal parents, the school's interests had to be paramount. This is tearing the place apart."

Mark Hicks Beach, chairman of the parents' committee set up to fight Mr Wilkes' case, said he was very disappointed by the resignation.

"Mr Wilkes is a superb headmaster who has done a lot for the school, but it had to be his decision."

"Both he and his wife have been through a lot of stress and strain in the last few weeks, and I can understand it. Whatever he has done has been in the best interests of the school," he said.

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# Money values: Giscard pinpoints key issue and questions value of Paris's economic and foreign icon

## French franc feels the heat

## Buoyant Italy says its ready to rejoin ERM

Mary Dejevsky  
Paris



In a miserably cold and wet November, with oil refineries barricaded by protesting lorry drivers and the public cross about the world in general and France in particular, a long-taboo subject has burst on to the political agenda. Suddenly it is open season on the franc fort, France's "strong-franc" policy, an article of faith and a totem of national dignity since well before Jacques Chirac became president.

The argument was reopened by the former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in a column in *l'Express*. Rather than conceal his remarks with a discreet headline, the magazine splashed the key question over its front cover: "Should the franc be devalued? Giscard's plan for breaking the impasse."

Mr Giscard broke not one, but two taboos. Recognising that Germany would be unlikely to agree any change in the value of the Mark against the dollar or any other currency, he proposed not only devaluing the franc by 9 per cent to trigger domestic growth but also decoupling it from the Mark, which would remove at one stroke the

cornerstone of French foreign and economic policy.

The response was immediate: on international exchanges, the franc wobbled; in 24 hours it had lost two centimes against the Mark. Politicians weighed in as though shackles had finally been broken. The debate was launched; the right was divided within itself; so, more quietly, was the left.

Those who backed Mr Giscard's view included Philippe Séguin, chairman of parliament and anti-Maastricht campaigner; Charles Pasqua, former interior minister, and Alain Madelin, former economy minister. All are infinitely more popular with the public than any member of the government.

With President Chirac visiting Japan, even the most pro-

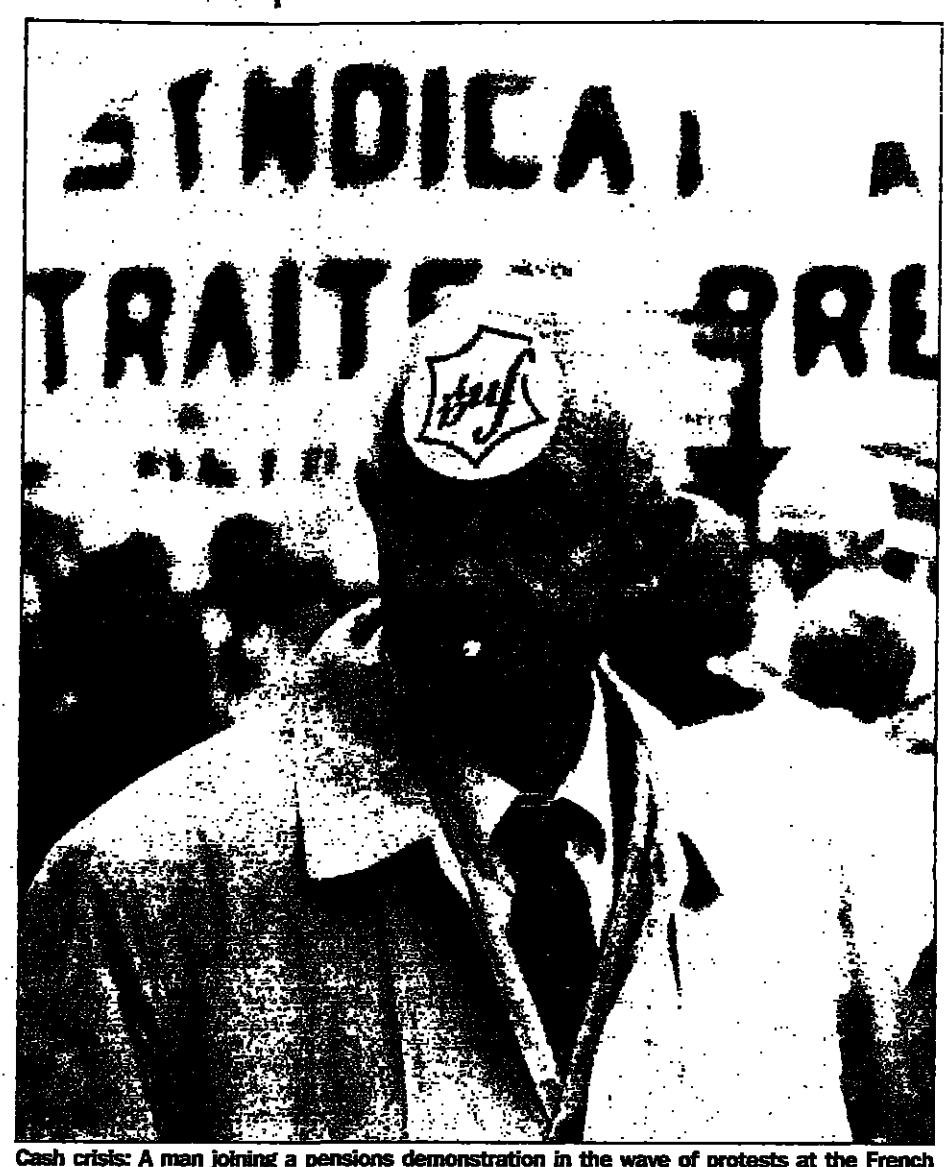
European government ministers seemed to hesitate before issuing a rebuttal.

When an official statement came – in the form of a brief joint communiqué from Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the French Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, no one took any notice. The franc continued to slide, and the politicians continued to scrap. Yesterday the governor of the Bank of France, Jean-Claude Trichet, issued a statement reiterating there was no change in its policy towards the exchange rate or the Mark, but uncertainty remained.

One reason was Mr Giscard's status as a veteran player in France's Europe policy, if no longer in party politics.

As one French commentator said: "You can say what you like about Giscard, but one thing you can't say is that he is stupid." He would have been well aware of the likely impact of his words: he may even have been used by President Chirac to fly a kite.

With unemployment stubbornly increasing despite a plethora of government measures to reduce it, might the French public just be willing to sacrifice a little national pride to find a solution?



Cash crisis: A man joining a pensions demonstration in the wave of protests at the French government's budget squeeze as it tries to bring the economy under control to qualify for EMU

Imre Karacs  
Bonn

In a last-minute sprint to the starting line of European monetary union, Italy served notice yesterday that it would rejoin the exchange-rate mechanism (ERM) within a week, and vowed to meet the Maastricht criteria laid down for participants in the new currency.

"Italy intends to be one of the founding members of EMU," proclaimed Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, the country's Finance Minister. Speaking at a European banking conference in Frankfurt, he added: "Italians are determined to do everything necessary to be an element of stability and not an element of tension or distortion."

Mr Ciampi said the lira, forced to retreat from the ERM in 1992, would be back in the fold "in November", thus meeting one of the three main conditions for EMU membership.

On the other conditions, public debt and budget deficit, Rome is also very close to attaining the targets – frighteningly close in German eyes. Italy's budget deficit is forecast to stand at 3.3 per cent of gross domestic product in the qualifying year of 1997. Under nor-

mal circumstances, that would have entitled the Germans to slam the door in Mr Ciampi's face, but the 0.3 per cent overshoot is likely to be no worse than Bonn's performance.

The Bundesbank and the German parliament have reserved themselves the right to vet all applications, confident that the "Club Med" countries would sink under the weight of their own abysmal statistics. Now Bonn is having to find new excuses to keep out those it does not trust. Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the top speaker at yesterday's Frankfurt event, shifted the emphasis to the less scientific concept of "long-term stability".

Emboldened by Germany's failings, former no-hopers are pressing their claims. Spain joined the vanguard yesterday with a confident prediction that the peseta would be in the hard core from the beginning.

The Club-Med's progress towards fiscal rectitude is in stark contrast to the profligacy of the two countries that are driving European integration. Germany has been temporarily knocked off course by the slowdown of its economy, but for France there appears to be no end in sight for economic and political turbulence.

### significant shorts

#### Deal eases tension in Belarus

A deal between President Alexander Lukashenko and MPs has eased tension in Belarus. He wanted to use a referendum tomorrow to tighten his grip on rival institutions and extend his term. He has now cancelled decrees making the results legally binding; in return, parliament agreed not to impeach him. *Reuters - Minsk*

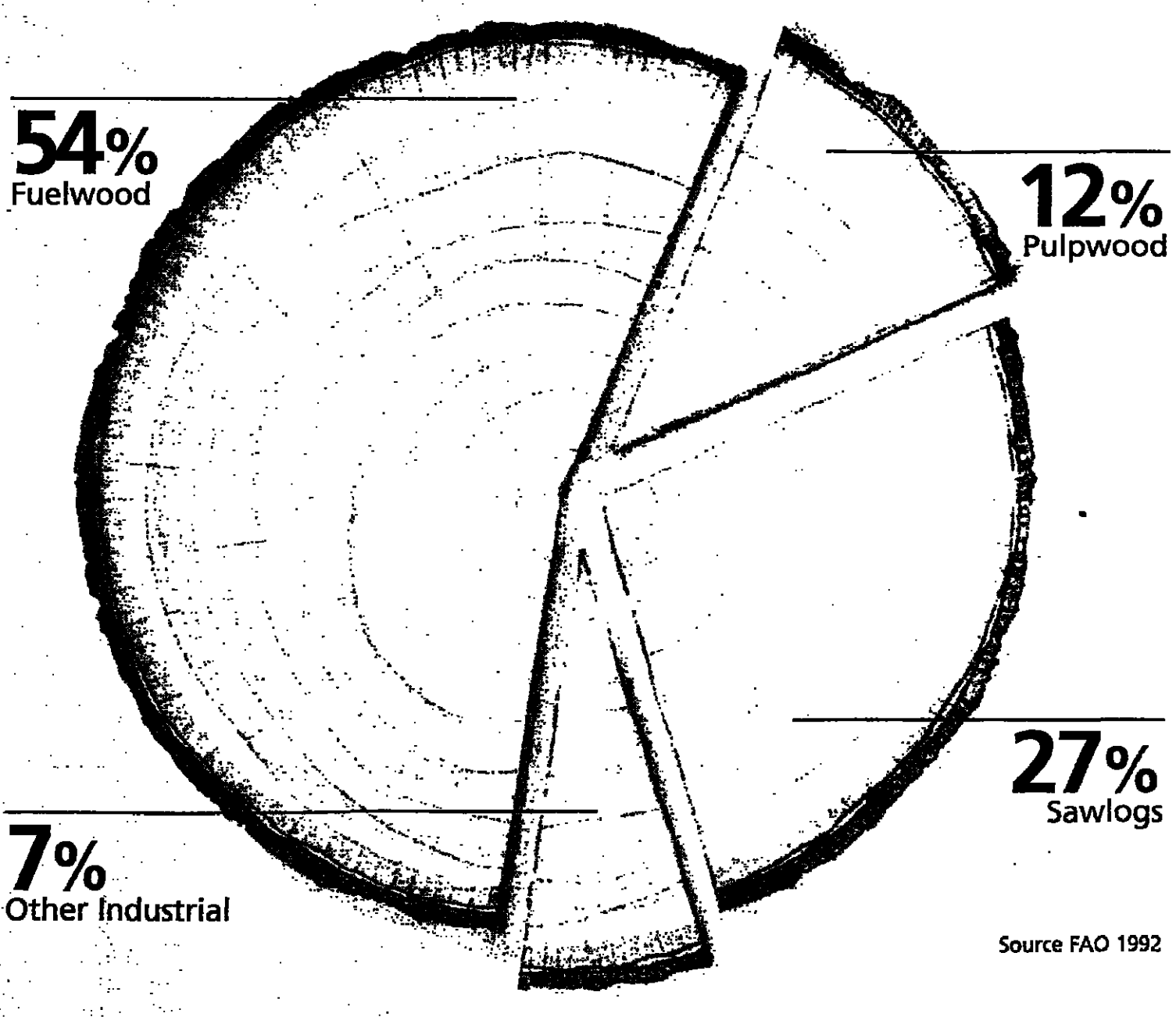
#### Jailed Chinese activist ailing

The dissident Wang Dan, jailed for plotting to overthrow the government, has throat and back problems in a prison that does not have facilities to treat him, and his condition could deteriorate with the onset of winter, his mother said. *Reuters - Peking*

#### Scientists convicted over suicide case

Fifteen Scientologists were convicted of fraud and other offences in a case that could help set boundaries between the power of the French state and the activity of religious groups. Charges related to the suicide of Patrice Vic, 31, after psychiatric treatment prescribed by Jean-Jacques Mazier, then head of the church in Lyons. Vic's widow said he was pressed by Mazier to continue taking sessions, which he could not afford. Mazier was convicted of unpremeditated murder and fraud and jailed for three years, half suspended. The judge said "individuals who use a legitimate religious doctrine for financial ... ends and in doing so deliberately deceive a third party are liable to be prosecuted for fraud". *Mary Dejevsky - Paris*

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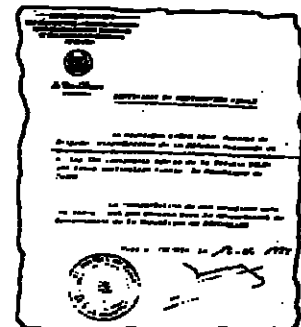


# Bloody trade that fuels Rwanda's war

Steve Boggan  
Chief Reporter

For once, it appeared that a UN arms embargo had worked. A ship, the *Malindi*, carrying more than 80 tons of weapons bound for troubled Somalia had been seized by the Government of Seychelles.

It was 1993 and the UN had banned sales of weapons to Somalia as warring clansmen reduced the country to chaos. "In impounding this ship," James Michel, the Seychelles Defence Minister, said, "we did the international community a service." There was no doubt, as



Key document: The Zairean end-user certificate

the death toll in Somalia mounted, that a service had been done. Within a year, however, the weapons had been targeted by the unscrupulous operatives of a new arms procurement network set up to devise ways of circumventing yet another UN embargo – that imposed on sales of arms to Rwanda after the murder of up to a million Tutsis in April and May 1994. Mr Michel and his colleagues did not know it, but they were about to fall victim to Colonel Theoneste Bagosora, a former Rwanda government defence official, had become the master arms

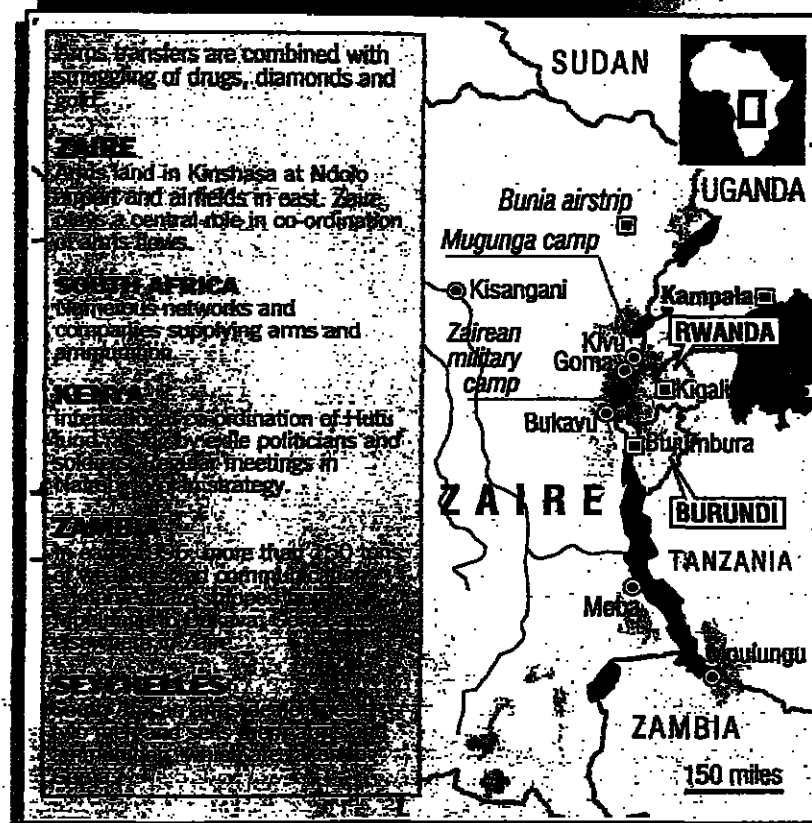
buyer for the Rwandan government in exile as it regrouped for what, had it happened, would surely have been one of the bloodiest wars in African history. The planned return to Rwanda was codenamed *Operation Insecticide* by Hutu militias.

Bagosora is just one of dozens of businessmen, patriots and mercenaries, operating from Kenya, Zaire, South Africa, Israel, the UK, Albania, the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, identified by a UN Commission of Inquiry into the extent – and sources – of illicit arms sales to Rwanda.

The deals are many, the methods ingenious, but perhaps the Seychelles sting is the best example of the lengths to which the former Rwandan government would go to re-arm. According to an unpublished UN report on the Commission's work, obtained by the *Independent*, the deal began with an approach to the Seychelles government by a South African businessman, Willem Ehlers, director of a company called Delta Aero.

Ehlers said he was interested in buying the impounded weapons, including 2,500 AK47 rifles, 6,000 mortars and 5,600 fragmentation grenades, on behalf of the Zairean government, against whom there is no embargo. On 4 June 1994, he arrived in the Seychelles, accompanied by Bagosora who, with the apparent complicity of the Zairean authorities, had a Zairean passport and an end-user certificate bearing the seal of the Republic of Zaire. Two shipments were flown out of the country on 16 and 18 June – more than a month after the UN embargo was imposed – before the Seychelles government became suspicious and stopped a third consignment. Media reports, fuelled in part by the in-

## How the world armed the Hutus



vestigative work of the charity Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, had established that the weapons had been diverted to Goma and into the hands of the former government forces. It was a perfect sting; weapons impounded on behalf of the UN were used to circumvent another UN arms embargo. But it was one of

many. "Highly reliable sources in Belgium, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and the United Kingdom painted a coherent picture of huge, loose, overlapping webs of more or less illicit arms deals, arms flights and arms deliveries spanning the continent from South Africa as far as Europe, particularly eastern Europe," said

the UN Commission's report, dated 28 October 1996. "Those engaged in such activities make free use of fake end-user certificates, exploit loopholes in the law, evade customs and other airport controls by making clandestine night take-offs and landings, file false flight plans and conceal their movements by using fabri-

icated zone permits, evading radar tracking and observing radio silence in flight." It has been suspected for years that a number of Britons or British companies had engineered arms sales to Rwanda up to the UN embargo of 17 May 1994. But last week came proof that at least one, Mil-Tec Corporation Ltd, had continued after it. Pa-

## FUND RAISING

Cash is raised in refugee camps, among Hutu communities worldwide and in Rwanda itself.

traced to Nairobi but he failed to return the Independent's calls. Both men are Kenyan, a fact which, in the procurement maze, is significant. For it was in Nairobi, Kenya, that the plans for a triumphant, if bloody, return were being hatched. Each month, meetings of military officials and wealthy Hutus were held in Nairobi where money was raised for the planned invasion. It was weapons known to have originated from Israel, Albania, Zambia, the Ukraine and Spain. Evidence showed a fully armed force, estimated at 50,000 men, was being trained in Zaire.

It is a credit to the Commission that so much information was gleaned. It has become the norm for their requests for information from governments to be ignored. In the three months to September this year, its members travelled across Africa and Europe but, by the end of October, they were still awaiting replies to questions posed of governments in Belgium, Bulgaria, Cameroon, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Italy, Kenya, Malta, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, the UK, Zaire and Zambia.

It is emerging that the arms deliveries were not confined to 1994. Two years after the imposition of the embargo, they continued, with evidence of more than 150 tons of weapons entering the country from Zaire in May of this year, and of 60 tons being flown into Zaire aboard two Ukrainian-registered aircraft, and on to the former government forces, in June.

The Commission's latest task is to find out more about a Nigerian-registered aircraft carrying arms from Malta to Goma on 25 May 1994, which, according to documents recently uncovered, included one Col T. Bagosora among its few passengers.

# Refugees massacred on return to Burundi, says UN

Geneva (agencies) – Nearly 300 Hutus returning from refugee camps in eastern Zaire were massacred in a church in Burundi last month, according to UN officials.

The report, by the UN Human Rights Centre, highlights a disturbing aspect of the exodus of Hutus from Zaire, which has 500,000 refugees in the last week. Based on a flood in refugee camps, those returning to Rwanda have been

received frostily but not mistreated. But many other refugees are trying to return to their homes in neighbouring Burundi, where they are walking into a continuing Hutu-Tutsi civil war.

The UN said its representatives learned of the attack when they visited the church in north-western Burundi last week. Based on a flood in refugee camps, those returning to Rwanda have been

the field-workers said 258 people died immediately of their bullet and hand grenade wounds. Some 110 people were wounded, of whom 40 later died, bringing the death toll to 298, the centre said.

Christiane Berthiaume, spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said the incident took place in a church in Murambi on 22 October. The victims, believed

to be Burundian Hutus, were among the first refugees to return to Burundi when fighting broke out around UN refugee camps in eastern Zaire last month.

A spokesman for Burundi's Tutsi-led army called the report "propaganda" from the National Council for the Defence of Democracy, a Hutu exile opposition group. "This is pure fabrication," Maj. Mamert

Sinarizi said yesterday. "I can tell you there was no massacre."

Meanwhile talks in Stuttgart between 35 nations ready in principle to take part in a military intervention force in central Africa got off to a slow and confusing start yesterday. The talks, between senior military officers, are expected to stretch through the weekend. The aim is to produce a menu of possible actions

for governments to consider, ranging from the 11,000-strong intervention force originally proposed to something much less ambitious.

"By the end of the weekend I would hope we will have developed a full state of options," said Lieutenant-General Maurice Baril of Canada, which is coordinating the UN-authorized mission. The original aim was to escort

aid to Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire and encourage them to go home.

But the voluntary return of 500,000 Rwandans in the last week has produced sharp disagreements on what kind of mission to send, if any. Governments have been unable to agree on the scale of the remaining problem, how many refugees remain in Zaire, their location and condition.



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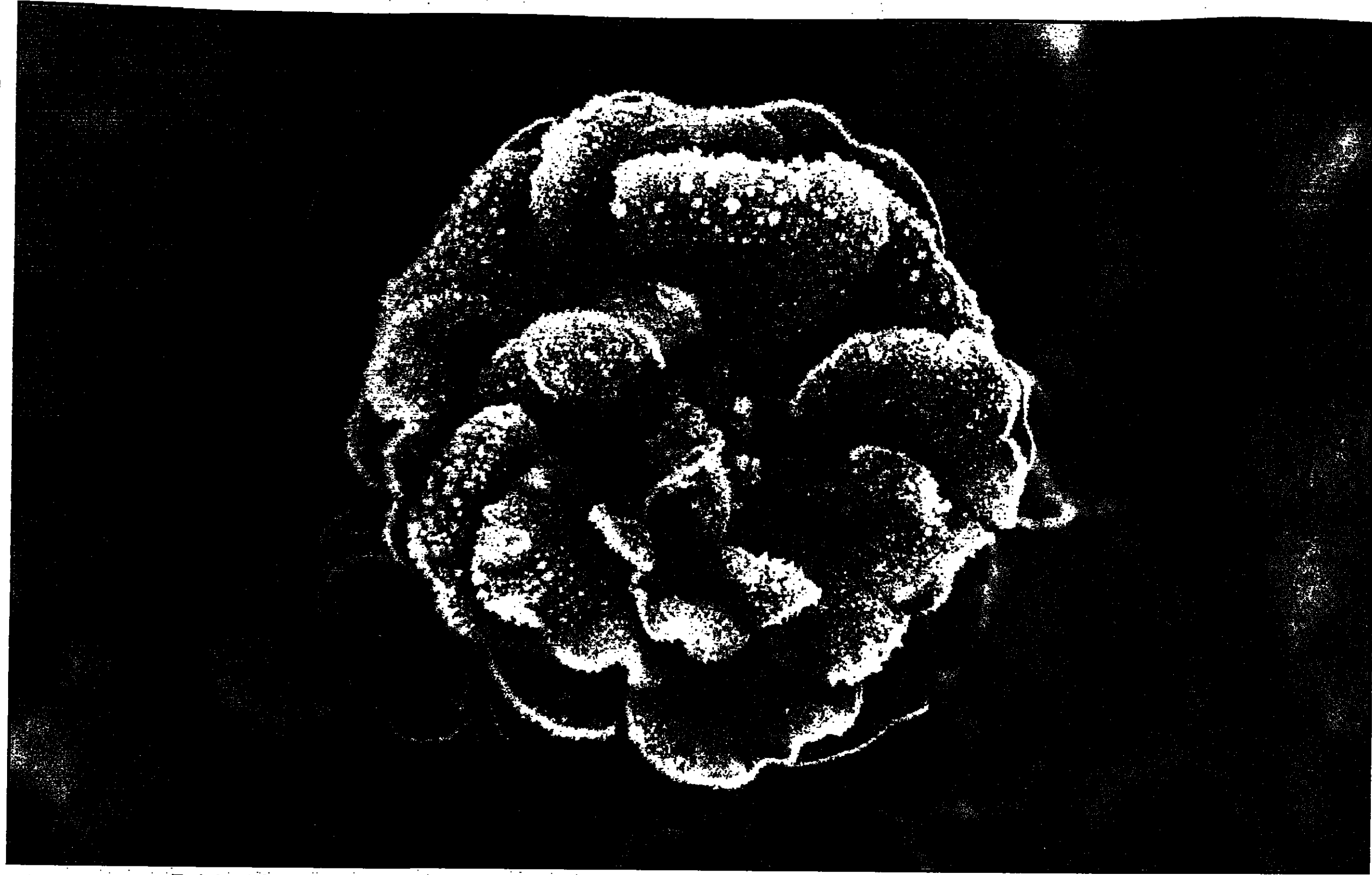




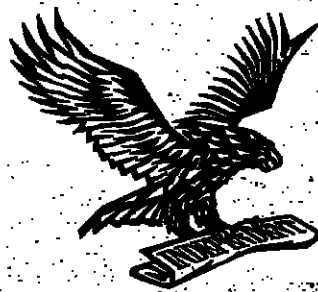
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50.1 من الاميل



The last rose of autumn, caught, delicately frosted, in the week's wintry blast. Taken with a macro lens and 1,000 ASA colour negative. Photographer Brian Harris



# the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 1996

The trains were late, cars broke down, everyone came to work damp and grumbling. You could tell it was winter. It was cold as well. The snow quickly melted into a drab grey and flowers that were bold and colourful the day before were struck down by the frost. Still, we can dream of sunny times in Antigua, mellow breaks in southern Spain and garner a little cheer with the news that even those old Christmas clichés - ties - can be a present classic.

## interview



### John Walsh meets ...Griff Rhys Jones

The proto/lad will be plundering laughs in a new version of a Ben Travers farce **page 3**

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## arts & books



### Glimpsing the divine in Wales

Jan Morris on the Welsh poet R.S. Thomas, laureate of a people's torment **page 6**

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### The island of 365 beaches ...and Viv

Simon Calder visits Antigua where, after the driving, the biggest danger is the sun **page 9**

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## money



### Does loyalty buy a happy Christmas?

Nic Cicutti on the incentives offered by credit cards. Are they worth the big spend? **page 18**

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## Smiling gold raiders get 25 years

TWO raiders were each jailed for 25 years yesterday for their part in Britain's biggest robbery. Builder Michael McAvoy, 32, and car dealer Brian Robins, 34, were sentenced to life sentences and that would mean actually serving out life.

## Whatever happened to Brinks-Mat?

**The moment:** In the early hours of Saturday 26 November 1983, six armed robbers slipped into the Brinks-Mat warehouse in Heathrow, posing as relief guards. Confronting genuine security workers, they ripped off the uniform of one of the guards, doused him in petrol, and told him that if he did not reveal the combination for vaults containing the gold, they would set him alight. Once in the vault, they removed 6,800 Mars-bar-size ingots of gold, worth more than £26m, that were being stored overnight before being transferred next morning to Hong Kong.

**How could it happen?** The military style precision of the operation took everyone by surprise: workers in the warehouse did not even realise that the vaults' contents were so valuable. "I knew it was run by Brinks-Mat but I didn't realise that there was £26m in one corner in there," said one. The thieves' detailed knowledge of the Fort Knox-style security system allowed them to enter undetected. Once they had let themselves in through the front door with a duplicate key, they took advantage of the disabling of the alarm systems at 6.30am to allow security staff to get in to start work. Surprisingly, it is now thought that the robbers expected to find a mere £1m in the vaults.

**The casualties:** The gold markets were the first to suffer. Within a week of the robbery, gold prices had risen dramatically, ironically increasing the value of the stolen bullion by £1,100,000.

The robbers did not stay free for long: their detailed knowledge of the security arrangements alerted the police to the possibility that an insider could be involved. A security guard, Anthony Black, was questioned, and his testimony later secured the convictions of two of the gang - his brother-in-law Micky McAvoy and Tony Robinson ("The Colonel"). A surveillance operation to track down the other criminals resulted in a policeman, John Fordham, being stabbed to death in the grounds of the person he was tracking, Kenneth Noye. Noye was later cleared of murder, claiming self defence, but was jailed for 14 years for his part in laundering the stolen bullion. Other members of the gang which fenced the ingots were arrested and jailed: four of them, who together laundered more than £14m, were each sentenced for between five and 10 years in 1992.

**Moments of substance:** The gold has never been fully recovered. Police say that half of it was melted and sold back to legitimate dealers, including Johnson Matthey, to whom it belonged. Much of it ended up as expensive jewellery. The rest, worth more than £10m, was buried and remains undiscovered. However, last year it emerged that Kenneth Noye reached a secret out-of-court settlement in which he is said to have surrendered more than £3m.

As this Tuesday - the 13th anniversary of the robbery - approaches, police still want to talk to Noye. Though he was released from jail for his part in the robbery two years ago, police are also trying to contact him about other incidents including the road rage killing in which a motorist, Stephen Cameron, was stabbed to death on the M25.

Sam Coates

## heavenly new pagans with a long history

The Church of England has issued a report on Britain's neo-pagan movements, which it presumes to be a threat to traditional Christianity. Radio 4's *The Moral Maze* devoted its entire programme last week to the report and the wider issue of the human need for irrationality, be it pagan or religious.

I think the Church is being too modest in playing down its own role in perpetuating these very elements. The pagan magic it now deplores was in on Christianity from the beginning. The emperor Constantine, who started the whole thing rolling in the 3rd century, owed his conversion to a heavenly portent - a vision of a flaming cross in the sky. Similarly, the Christian conquest of these islands, radiating out from the

Roman pattern of occupation and conversion, made paganism central to its mission. When St Augustine was busy colonising Canterbury and its surrounds for the new Christian movement, he specifically queried Pope Gregory the Great on how to treat the many quaint practices he found. No matter how eagerly they embraced the new revealed religion, Britons remained reluctant to abandon native beliefs. What was he to do? In a response which makes Machiavelli look like a narrow-minded ideologue, the Pope urged tolerance. After "deliberating long about the Christian people", he exhorted Augustine to convert idol temples into Christian shrines. The people, he reasoned,



Ann Geneva

would be more ready to come to places they were familiar with, and besides, "it is doubtless impossible to cut out everything at once from their stubborn minds". Now there was a natural-born politician. The resultant hybrid, as pagan sites were turned into Christian ones and given their own saints, persisted for centuries in church architecture and interiors. Many other

wonderful things followed from this religio-cultural spice. The plough was dragged into the church for blessing on Plough Monday to ensure the growth of corn; church bells were baptised with holy water to render them powerful enough to dispel thunder; soil from the churchyard was endowed with magical powers; and for a peck of oats St Wilgerford would dispose of unwanted husbands for disaffected wives. St Brigit's Well in Oxford is still considered to bestow fertility.

Some enchanting customs, such as Morris dancing and maypoles, survived even the Protestant reformers, who used their destruction as stalking-horses to target the biggest magic of all - transubstantiation. But the Puritans went too far in

the eyes of many when they banned Christmas and chopped down the Glastonbury Thorn. In many cases, Protestant magic was merely substituted for the old ways, as in New England, where the Bible was used to divine one's fate by opening it at random.

I remember the surprise I felt upon first encountering multiple deities in the house of an American Indian family in New Mexico. Lined up along their window sill was a sequence of gods: two Indian carvings, statues of the Virgin Mary and Christ - and a picture of John F. Kennedy, the only one of the pantheon to merit a lighted candle. At the time, it blew my mind; now it seems the height of wisdom. After all, if the magic works why not co-opt it?

## in addition

This has been a week of surveys. Thanks to the indefatigable work of the nation's pollsters, we have learnt, in the past seven days, who is considered to be Britain's sexiest MR, which TV advert is most despised, what proportion of dunks would bother to fish out a piece of soggy biscuit from a drink and how many of us would have homosexual sex from our TV screens. Adding all this to other recent surveys we are now able to offer a cut-out-and-keep guide to who does what to whom and how often.

Activity	per cent
Britons who love their country	85
Find Bob Hoskins BT ads irritating	33
Women who think Peter Mandelson is sexy	45
Cats that are overweight	47
Biscuit dunkers	59
Dunkers who would fish out dunked biscuit from tea	12
Call the lavatory the "loo"	36
Husbands who clean the loo	8
Men hoping for casual sex at office Christmas parties	20
Women hoping for same	1
Men who wear same underpants all week	1
Women disgusted by hairy men	57
Women who would rather watch TV than make love	21
Want to ban gay sex on TV	54
Want to ban all sex on TV	27
Have enjoyed sex in a field	56
Have been cuddled while washing the dishes	62
Have experienced dandruff	60
Have tried cannabis at least once	20
Have never tried cannabis	60
Don't know if they've tried cannabis	20

We deduce that there is one cannabis-smoking woman in Britain who hates Bob Hoskins, is married to a man who doesn't often change his underpants, and dreams of having sex with Peter Mandelson in a loo that her hubby has cleaned. Madam, you should be ashamed of yourself!

### Lottery tips:

Last Saturday, we mentioned the all-pervading influence of the number 42. And what, on that very day, was the first number to emerge from the lottery barrel? None other than 42, of course! Encouraged by that success, we are pleased to offer this week's lottery tips. After deep research and rune-casting, we recommend that you avoid the following numbers:

1, 11, 19, 23, 33, 42.

Anyone betting on these six numbers, we believe, will win nothing at all.

William Hartston

## earthly Charlotte and the freedom fighter

It's 7.45am and there's a thick layer of frost on the church hall roof. Buried beneath the duvet, clocking up my fifth hour of sleep, I'm leading a guerrilla resistance operation against some faceless but evil Nazi types in the hills around Petra. I've just pushed a chunk of Nabataean crows-pees on to a convoy of jeeps when the phone rings.

I hate it when it does that. Telephones and jeeps don't mix. For a moment I cast around the wadi to see where the satphone went. Then I'm awake, and stumbling through the grim morning. Too little time to find a dressing gown before the Ansaphone goes off.

"Hello?" The breathy monotone of the Shires. "Hi," it says. "It's Charlotte. Is Charlie there?"

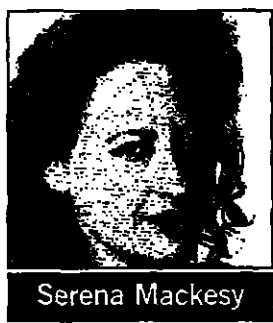
These calls never happen at night, when at least you could blame drugs or alcohol for the misadventure. For this I had to drop my Uzi. I sigh. "Wrong number."

"Oh," she says. Then hangs up. No sorry or anything; just a dialling tone. Morning people are so smug about their moral probity; it never occurs to them to apologise.

"It's perfectly all right. Any time. Just feel free to call." I replace the receiver. Thirty seconds later, as the bedclothes start to warm up, it rings again.

"Hi, it's Charlotte. Can I speak to Charlie?" "Look, Charlotte, you've still got the wrong number."

"Oh. Is that -?" She recites my number. "Yes." "Well, Charlie must be there, then."



Serena Mackesy

"Sorry. He's not."

"Well, when's he going to be back?"

"He won't be. He doesn't live here."

"Oh. Has he moved?"

"No idea, but he doesn't live here."

"Oh." She hangs up. I dial 1471. She's withheld her number. I briefly consider a fag and a cup of coffee, then take the phone to the bedroom.

This time, she gives me

just enough time to believe she's given up. The furring of a light doze has begun to translate itself into moments of blackness, and every now and then I catch a glimpse of the Qasr el Bint from above, from the table mountain where Saul or Doeg or one of those biblical warmongers cornered 18,000 Edomites and chucked them off a cliff. Any moment now, a hand grenade is going to form in my hand and I'll be off and running.

Instead, the phone rings and I dial in search of it. "Hello, Charlotte."

There's a pause. "Can I speak to Charlie, please?"

"Charlotte. I can't help you with this. I don't know who Charlie is."

She thinks she's caught me out. "If you don't know who he is," she says triumphantly, "How did

you know my name?"

"You told me the last two times you rang."

Silence.

"Look, Charlotte," I sit up. "Charlie isn't here."

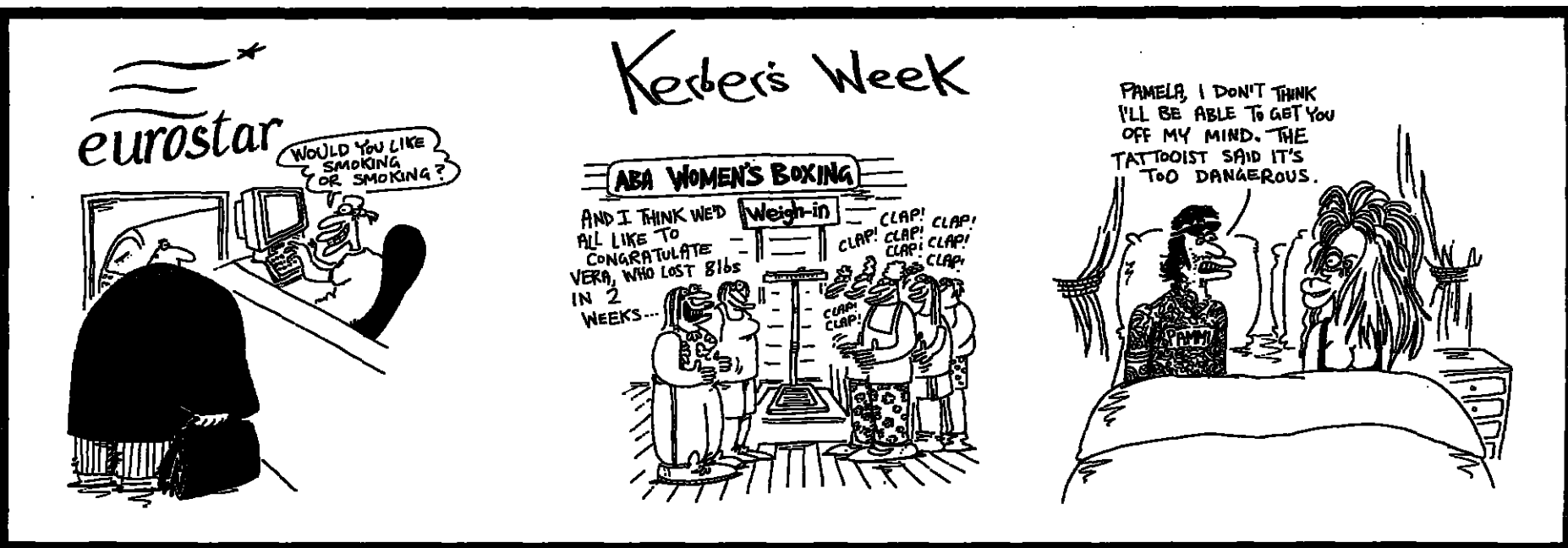
I've lived here for years, and there's never been anyone called Charlie here. You've either got the wrong number or he's given you the wrong number. I'm sorry about that, but please don't ring me again. I still won't be able to produce him. OK?"

More silence.

"Goodbye, Charlotte."

There's no point now. I'll never know if my freedom fight came out right. I find a jumper, start switching on heating. As I fill the kettle, the phone goes again.

"Look," says Charlotte. "Can you tell Charlie that if he didn't want to speak to me he could have just told me?"



## weekend weather

### The British Isles

#### General Situation and 5-Day Outlook

Pressure will be low from Scandinavia to the central Mediterranean for the next few days with a cold northwest flow over the British Isles.

Today, rain over Scotland will clear away to the south as brighter weather and some sunshine spreads from the north. However, there will be wintry showers and a chilly northwest wind. Northern Ireland will see rain giving way to sunshine and showers for the afternoon, but with a cool wind. Patchy fog over England and Wales will lift, and it should stay dry to the south with some sunshine and light winds. However, rain will be moving south.

Sunday will see rain in the south clearing to leave the whole of the country with a mix of sunshine and wintry showers. Monday also promises some sunshine after a frosty start. There will, though, be snow showers to the north while rain or snow spreads into the southwest. Sleet and snow is expected across the southern half of the country during Tuesday with sunshine and snow showers to the north. The cold weather will then continue through the middle of the week with snow showers.

Aberdeen	f	1	34	Cardiff	sh	6	43	Ipswich	f	4	39	Oxford	c	5	41
Anglesey	sh	7	45	Carlisle	c	3	37	Isles of Scilly	f	9	48	Plymouth	sh	6	43
Ayr	f	2	36	Dover	f	7	45	Jersey	c	9	46	Ronaldsway	f	6	43
Belfast	f	3	37	Dublin	c	4	39	Liverpool	c	5	41	Scarborough	f	5	41
Birmingham	c	5	41	Edinburgh	f	2	36	Lizard	c	8	46	Southampton	c	6	43
Blackpool	sh	6	43	Exeter	c	6	43	London	c	6	43	Southend	c	7	45
Bournemouth	sh	7	45	Glasgow	f	2	36	Manchester	c	5	41	Stornoway	f	1	34
Brighton	c	9	48	Guernsey	c	9	48	Newcastle	c	2	36	Time	f	4	39
Bristol	c	7	45	Inverness	s	2	36	Nottingham	c	5	41	York	c	5	41

### Europe and The World

WORLD WEATHER YESTERDAY, MIDDAY (GMT): c, cloudy; l, light fog; rain; sn, snow; s, sunny; th, thunder \*previous day's figure at local time.

Amsterdam	c	8	45	Darwin	f	13	91	New York	c	5	43
Athens	c	19	66	Flourence	m	13	55	Nicosia	s	22	72
Auckland	f	12	70	Frankfurt	s	5	41	Paris	f	5	43
Bangkok	f	13	91	Geneva	s	4	39	Prague	c	2	36
Barcelona	f	19	66	Gibraltar	s	18	64	Reykjavik	s	-5	23
Beirut	s	22	72	Helsinki	f	6	43	Riyadh	c	21	70
Belgrade	c	9	48	Hong Kong	s	25	77	Rome	f	16	61
Berlin	f	7	45	Istanbul	s	15	59	Singapore	f	30	86
Bombay	c	20	58	Jerusalem	c	20	58	Stockholm	m	4	39
Buenos Aires	c	31	88	Jo'burg	c	26	79	Sydney	c	12	54
Brussels	f	6	43	Kuala Lumpur	c	26	79	Tenrife	f	24	75
Budapest	c	5	41	Lisbon	f	18	64	Tokyo	f	17	63
Cairo	s	29	84	Madrid	f	15	59	Toronto	f	2	36
Cebu	f	25	77	Majorca	f	20	68	Verona	f	5	41
Cape Town	s	19	66	Malta	c	21	70	Vienna	c	3	37
Casablanca	s	19	66	Melbourne	s	15	59	Warsaw	c	4	39
Christchurch	f	17	63	Moscow	c	8	46	Wellington	c	6	43
Copenhagen	f	5	41	Munich	f	3	37				
Cori	c	15	59								

### AA Roadwatch

M4 Gloucestershire. Between J18 Bath Junction (A46 Dodington) and J19 Bristol Parkway (M23), major roadworks with two lanes open eastbound, three running westbound.

M25 Greater London. Between J25 Watlington Grove (A10) and J26 Watlington Abbey (A121), maintenance work on both carriageways will mean slip road restrictions and a contraflow at times. Expect delays.

M1 West Yorkshire. J47 Leeds (M62/A63 Holbeck), long-term roadworks and lane closures with speed limits down to 30mph. Expect delays on the M1, M62 and Dewsbury Road.

### The Sky at Night

Looking east-southeast at about 9pm on Monday 25th November, with the nearly full moon in Taurus.

On Monday evening, 25 November, the almost full Moon lies in the constellation of Taurus, very close to Aldebaran, the bright orange star that marks the eye of the Bull.

A giant star 25 light years away, Aldebaran ranks as the 14th brightest star in the sky, so should be easy to spot despite the moonlight. Members of the Hyades star cluster, scattered around Aldebaran, will not be so obvious with the Moon so close by. They will be easier to see later in the week when the Moon has moved on in its monthly trek around the sky. Though Aldebaran appears to be in the Hyades, it is in fact much nearer. The stars belonging to the cluster are 150 light years away.

Jacqueline Mitton

You'd have to look hard to find a smaller fare.

Contact your local travel agent or call for details on 0345 554554 or 0345 I FLY BM

**British Midland The Airline for Europe**

Return fare from London Heathrow. Available on specified dates and flights. Subject to availability. Travel must include a Saturday night stay. Passenger taxes will apply.

### NICE £149

Lighting-up Times

London	4:01pm	7:34am
Bristol	4:11pm	7:43am
Birmingham	4:04pm	7:45am
Manchester	4:01pm	7:51am
Newcastle	3:51pm	7:56am
Glasgow	3:57pm	8:11am
Belfast	4:11pm	8:11am
London	4:00pm	7:35am
Bristol	4:10pm	7:45am
Birmingham	4:03pm	7:47am
Manchester	4:00pm	7:53am
Newcastle	3:50pm	7:58am
Glasgow	3:56pm	8:13am
Belfast	4:09pm	8:13am

### Air Quality

Yesterday's Readings

Location	NO <sub>2</sub>	SO <sub>2</sub>
London	Good	Good
S. England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C. England	Good	Good
N. England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N. Ireland	Good	Good

Outlook for Today

Location	NO <sub>2</sub>	SO <sub>2</sub>
London	Good	Good
S. England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C. England	Moderate	Good
N. England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N. Ireland	Good	Moderate

High Tides

Location	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	-	-	12.04	7.1
Liverpool	9.37	9.1	21.56	9.3
Aberdeen	5.29	5.2	17.49	13.1
Hull (Humber Dock)	4.13	7.5	16.32	7.4
Glasgow	11.04	3.5	23.26	3.6
Dun Laoghaire	10.12	4.0	22.23	4.1

Sun and Moon: Rising and setting



David  
Lister's

## Notebook

How the Lowestoft tourist board must be glowing with pride and free publicity: Sir Tim Rice, lyricist for *Jesus Christ Superstar*, lets it be known that he prefers a walking holiday there to attending the first night of the musical's revival at the Lyceum. If Sir Tim is the toast of Lowestoft, I can tell him he was also the talk of the after-show party. Even the normally serene Lady Lloyd Webber was moved to tell me that she deplored Sir Tim's absence as it meant that husband Andrew could not go on stage at the end, and therefore the young cast was deprived of photographs with the pair that would have gone round the world.

I might be able to cast some light on the reason for Sir Tim's staying away. Chatting to Robert Stigwood, the impresario who put on the original *Jesus Christ Superstar*, it emerged that Sir Tim might associate first nights with vomiting. According to Stigwood, "Back in the Seventies, Tim was a hypochondriac. After every big first night he immediately became ill."

The best theatre of the week occurred at the Donmar Warehouse where Equity held a press conference to launch a report on the state of subsidised theatre. In the front row sat the secretary general of the Arts Council and two other spectres from her organisation. No sooner had Equity begun than the Arts Council team interjected and accused them of having their facts wrong. Could it be that the Arts Council had, just a fortnight earlier, published its own state-of-the-nation drama report and did not wish to be outdone?

Whatever the reason, there was a rapid descent into melodrama. Veteran actress Miriam Karlin leapt to her feet to accuse the Arts Council of "succumbing too easily to lottery money". Mary Allen pootled this. The actress and Equity vice president Charlotte Cornwell twitched with irritation until she could contain herself no longer. "Only now after 28 years in the business have I cleared my debts," she wailed. The whole sorry shambles did little to publicise the plight of regional theatres. On the other hand, if they had intended to show there is dramatic and emotional argument to be found in our theatres, they illustrated their point brilliantly.

In matters of how to win friends and influence people, Kenneth Hudson, director of European Museum of the Year Award and advisor to the European Union on cultural tourism is the *unpareil*. At a lunch at the Reform Club, Mr Hudson was the guest speaker of the Cyprus Tourist Board. The faces of the 40 or so Greek Cypriots present turned a shade of puce as Mr Hudson lectured them on how the real way to improve tourism was to open up links with the Turkish Cypriots again. He also noted that Cyprus wine used to be "disgusting, really horrible," and was exported to Russia for industrial use. "However," he noted beaming at the bottle of red in front of him, "it has clearly drastically improved now". And he toasted their health with the new and improved "Cyprus wine", which, had he read the label, declared itself to be Reform Club Claret.

HERBIE KNOTT

## A nerd-magnet speaks out

Standing in a corridor on the first floor of the Duke of York barracks in Chelsea, I experienced a curious dual sensation. In this humourless martial building, I was waiting for my lunch date to appear and, to while away the time, was reading the notice board. I'd got to a helpful sign advising passers-by about the "Rules of Engagement for service personnel authorised to carry arms and ammunition on duty in the UK. 1) You may ONLY open fire against a person if..." Glancing up, I found myself watching, through a glass door, a horrible scene unfold in which frantic-looking man in a check shirt and a recidivist's haircut jerkily pursued a young woman around a *chaise longue*. Was it sufficient reason to consider opening fire? No, it was just Griff Rhys Jones rehearsing his new role, as D'Arcy Tuck, a glib upper-class robber, in Ben Travers's classic farce *Plunder*, which is coming to the Savoy theatre on 2 December; and Mr Rhys Jones is the last comedian you would consider shooting.

He is, everyone agrees, so lovable - so droll, so cuddly, so engagingly dim, so boyishly manic all the time. Most of these emetic judgements come from women, who tend to want to mother the hapless Griff; but he's also a hit with a certain type of chap. "What fame has brought me, apart from money and getting a table at Langham's," he says in that steamroller croak of a voice, "is a lot of odd young men who

want to sit next to me on trains. I've become a nerd-magnet." What do they want to talk to you about? "Oh, a variety of things. Quite often it's 'Can you come and say you're my friend - I'm trying to pick up this girl further up the train...'"

He shakes his head sadly. He may have become identified, over the years, through 10 series of *Alas Smith and Jones*, four films, *Not the Nine O'Clock News* and a string of West End farces, with a certain strain of British wit - the unsmiling, unstoppable anorak, determined to have his way, argue his corner and drive people mad; but he has no time for real-life nerds - or lads. I tried to float the theory that his and Mel Smith's celebrated head-to-head conversations about gross male topics, from flavoured condoms to body piercing, ushered in a new era of unbuttoned discussion that led to *Men Behaving Badly* 10 years on. Were he and Mel Smith protolads? Would he accept responsibility for *loaded* magazine?

"We have been accused of being at the yob end of the humour market. But we were never as extreme as *The Young Ones*, say. There was just a general opening up, at the time, of what could be said. But surely," he says with a disgusted squawk, "*loaded* magazine is the saddest thing you could read. It's got that kind of desperation you find among men trying to have fun. What we're more fascinated with is the simple joy of two rather thick men trying to discuss matters slightly beyond their comprehension."

As we approach our lunch - two lacquered platefuls of *Pret à Manger* sushi - with the ironic

caution of Englishmen faced with foreign foodie folderol - one steals a look at Griff Rhys Jones in his maiden-aunt specs and wonders: how smart is he? Rhys Jones has made such a spectacular 18-year career out of playing silly asses and bewildered innocents, the unwary might wonder if he were himself a tiny bit simple, despite his Cambridge degree.

This theory does not survive for long, as he dilates with professorial eloquence on his favourite topic, the nature of comedy. "In simple dramatic terms, all relationships based on friendship between men have an interdependency that makes them work: Hancock and Sid, Galton and Simpson. There's a Yin and Yang element. There's always one who's fierce and effectively in charge, who's always tripped up by the other, who is too stupid to follow what's going on, who is therefore a free spirit, unshackled and anarchic, because he doesn't know any better. It's there in *Waiting for Godot* too, of course..."

Gosh. Pretty soon, you're into swathes of theatrical history, chalk squeaking on blackboard: "On the whole, male-female relationships don't dominate comedies - it's nearly always master-and-manservant or two men working off each other". What about Benedick and Beatrice? "Oh all right, since the Restoration. After that, suddenly everything went off into male bonding. And women reverted, from having any independence at all, to becoming just figures the men can lust after."

His new role as D'Arcy Tuck in *Plunder* is a classic Griff role. "He's not quite Bertie Wooster, because he's more nervous, and more complicated. He's someone who's terribly polite, but also very nervous, so he keeps saying terribly rude things to people..." And - though it's an odd riff to hear from an accomplished farceur who was such a hit in *Charley's Aunt* - he is keen to emphasise that it isn't really a farce. This, you come to realise, is because he was fed a diet of Brian Rix's Whitehall farces on television when young, about which he is scathing. Ben Travers, he says, by contrast with Feydeau or Wodehouse, doesn't follow any of the rules comic characters are supposed to. "There's a moment in his play *Thark* when the chap is with his girl, who suspects him of cheating, and he says, 'No, I love you Kitty, I love you so much, I can't explain to you. I was walking home the other night and I was saying your name over and over again, Kitty, Kitty, Kitty, Kitty, and when I got to my gate there were 15 cats behind me...' That

John  
Walsh  
meets...  
Griff Rhys  
Jones

line would only be put in by Travers. Feydeau would never dream of it."

Rhys Jones's sweetly confiding cackle is contagious. He is a performer who, when off-stage, radiates a controlled frenzy of amusement, his conversation always a hairtrigger away from hysteria.

The press release for *Plunder* guardedly describes him as a "leading exponent of comedy" rather than either a comedian

ing to people rustling in their seats, that doesn't seem to me to be very entertaining."

He was born in 1953 in Cardiff, but moved, at six months old, to Scotland. His mother was a nurse, his father a doctor, and the short-trousered Griff's summers were spent in the unpromising, but evocative surroundings of the "Essex Riviera" - places like Clacton and Walton and Frington, the pub-free home of sev-

group of 10 or 11 people ever since we left Cambridge". The group includes Clive Anderson, Rory McGrath of *They Think It's All Over* fame, the actor Jimmy Mulville and the National Theatre director Nick Hytner, although his original associates also included the present secretary general of the Arts Council, Mary Allen. Of the Cambridge crowd, the one he most revered was John Lloyd, later better known as *Not the Nine O'Clock News* and *Spitting Image*.

"He was the most straightforwardly funny person to sit at the feet of and laugh, although he was too tortured to be witty. But if he was on a roll..." Characteristically, a mature Rhys Jones analysis rears its head. "Being on a roll was what you wanted from a funny person when you were 21. That's why Peter Cook never grew up: he wanted to be on a roll all the time. As you get older, what you want to talk about is life, death, art, views. You don't necessarily want to sit around while someone gets off on a roll..."

Growing up also involved getting married (to Jo, a graphic designer, 14 years ago) and having children, (George, 11, and Catherine, 9), acquiring vintage cars and writing sentimental articles about his desire to conserve the Essex coastline of his childhood summers, if necessary by the expedient of buying up whole towns with his vast wealth. Between this, the Arthur Ransome connection and the "new" 1928 farce, it's easy to see Mr Rhys Jones as probably the most old-fashioned comedian in the country, after Sir Roy Strong.

He's never been exactly alternative. And now he worries about becoming a vintage model himself at the gaired old age of 43, as he watches wave after wave of new young scriptwriters, all trying to be funny for a living. They come, they go, writing sketches for *Alas Smith and Jones* and departing. "We suffer a bit on *Alas*, by being a little tired for some writers - they'd rather write for *The Fast Show* or *Harry Hill* or *Alceci* [Sayle], who's slightly more hip. We passed through a phase, not long ago, when we were like Deep Purple, you know, so old we'd almost come out the other end and become hip again. Apart from age, Mr Rhys Jones gets all embarrassed at a) praise; b) memories of some disgraceful episodes in his career, like the time in *Charley's Aunt* when, exasperated by the old ladies' chorus in the front row, he ad-libbed the play's most famous line to become, "I'm Charley's aunt from Brazil - where the n-n-nazi war

criminals come from"; c) mention of his famous namesake, Sophie, the fiancée of Prince Edward - they're not related but the *Sun* once rang up Griff's uncle at 3am just to ask; and d) enquiries about his deeply bogus Welsh identity, of his Christian name.

He admits to having inherited a few Welsh traits over the years ("like neuroticism, over-reaction and defensiveness") but most especially a determination to drink to excess. "I'm happy to say I have no control over my appetites. I could never have two drinks and say, 'Thanks, that's enough,' he says. "The Welsh drink only to get drunk, like Dylan Thomas, like the Finns. If I started, I'd go on until I was under the table." He did, in fact, give up alcohol 12 years ago, not because it was ruining his liver, but because "by the age of 30, I reckoned that I'd already drunk my allotted life's worth. Everyone is allowed a certain amount in their lives, and you can either drink it quickly, like me, or spread it over the years. I'm just looking at it logically." Did he apply the same principle to sex? "No, no, no," he laughed noisily. "I never followed it through quite to that extent."

Was it true that, as Rory McGrath once said, he lived his life in a permanent state of crisis? "Oh yes," he said happily. "I'm a crisis junkie." But how then did he seem so mellow and equilibrial? "Because I'm enjoying it. I'm the sort of person who likes to manufacture crises out of minor things. I never lost the idea that you have more fun with something if it's over-dramatised."

Poet uses  
com...Archaeologist  
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# arts & books

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Mario Puzo on the lure of Mob lore. By Tom Dewe Mathews

## Pasta with panache

Mario Puzo's new book takes up from where *The Godfather* left off. So instead of just putting a horse's head on a movie mogul's pillow, we now have the entire Mob wanting to jump into bed with Hollywood. And just as Johnny Fontane, the Mafia-connected crooner from *The Godfather*, reminded readers of Frank Sinatra, so Puzo's *The Last Don* will also provoke parallels with the Mob's real-life moves on Tinseltown. Not that Puzo himself will admit it.

"Hollywood's too tough for the Mafia," grows the 75-year-old author down the line from his Long Island home. "There's too much money involved in the movie business," he explains. "Those Hollywood guys aren't scared of the Mafia, they're not scared of the government, they're not scared of anybody." But then Puzo, in a slow-talking, mid-Manhattan accent – which elongates Mafia into Ma-fia – complicates the issue by conceding that "the Mafia don't want to own the cow they're milking. They want somebody else to own the cow. Then they milk it for themselves. Otherwise it's too much trouble."

Throughout our conversation, Puzo makes it quite clear that this unholy alliance between the movies and the Mob is almost as old as Hollywood itself. From Thirties mobster "Bugsy" Siegel's "offer of protection to the movie moguls," through to "the Cleveland syndicate's wartime suppression of [Hollywood] unions," up to "the Genovese gang's current control of porn movies," apparently every Mafia Family wants – or has wanted – to make Hollywood an offer it can't refuse. But this native of New York's Hell's Kitchen and long-time frequenter of the Las Vegas casinos doggedly refuses to admit to any personal knowledge of Mob shenanigans. The wily Don of the Mafia novel plays devil's advocate by insisting that the studio takeover in *The Last Don* is "complete fiction on my part. That would never happen in real life."

Because, as Puzo repeatedly insists, real-life studio chiefs are more than a match for the hardest of Dons. "It has to do with personal power. You have a great house, you have everything you want: women, jacuzzis, cars, airplanes. So the stakes are very high. You're willing to risk more. I think the Mafia is a little scared of that power. They can't just knock off the head of a studio all the time. It's too big a jump. There would be too much of an uproar. Hollywood, after all, is very well plugged into Washington. A lot of money goes to Washington – especially during elections. So the FBI would take special pains."

Not that Puzo himself is overawed by Hollywood. Indeed, not long ago he told me that he had successfully sued two studios for loss of profits on his screenplays for *Superman* and *Earthquake*. He is also disturbed by the town's pretentiousness and flashy style, to confirm his distaste he describes a meeting with one of Hollywood's most stylish gangsters. "Whenever I see a guy with panache," he says, "I get scared. Now, Joey Gallo had panache. He wanted me to write his autobiography. I ran like a thief. I told my publisher he would be

dead in six months. And he was. I knew he would be killed because he had too much panache. More pasta and less panache is a good saying to remember."

For any follower of real hoodlums in Hollywood, Puzo is a gold mine of good stories: "Ah, Johnny 'Don Giovanni' Roselli... Yeah, I met him. He produced B-movies for Warners – ended up in a dumpster in Florida." He does, however, make one specific exception to his intriguing dips into Tinseltown crime. "Sure, Frank Sinatra hung out with Mafia guys, but whether he was really mixed up with them, who knows? Maybe it's because I admire him, I'm prejudiced." Unfortunately for Puzo, though, Sinatra has not returned the compliment. The legendary swinger from Hoboken has now become almost interchangeable in the public mind with *The Godfather*'s singer Johnny Fontane, and for this reason Frank Sinatra gave Puzo a tongue-lashing when they finally met a couple of years ago at the Hollywood restaurant Chasen's. Of the incident, Puzo has said, "The worst thing he called me was a pimp"; and perhaps it was this insult that provokes Puzo, during our transatlantic conversation, to drop in a story that shows Sinatra in a less than favourable light.

But like those cunning old Sicilian hoods in his novels, Puzo bides his time. In the midst of spelling out his latest book's overall theme of the assimilation of the Mob into mainstream America – "those old-time Mafia men, who got into Vegas when it started; they never went back to Mafia stuff. Carl Cohen, for instance, one of the nicest guys, ran the Sands casino..." – he suddenly interrupts himself. "Cohen punched out Sinatra." Why? "Sinatra had just lost his girlfriend. He was drunk and tearing around the hotel breaking everything up. Carl came out and told him to cool down. So Sinatra turns to his bodyguards and screams, 'Get him.' But the bodyguards knew who Cohen was. 'Not us,' they moaned. So Frank took a swipe – and missed. Carl didn't, though. He punched him out – split Sinatra's lip and knocked the caps off his two front teeth. Later on, I asked Cohen what had happened. And all he would say was, 'That was sooooo unfortunate.' Such good manners," Puzo proudly recalls. "He didn't want to brag. But he was a certified killer."

With friends like this, it's not surprising that most people believe Puzo is a Mafia "made man". Even Johnny Russell, the Mob-financed film producer, in his first meeting with Puzo insisted, "Admit it, Puzo, you're one of the guys." So how does the writer himself react to this confusion? Is he irritated? "Nah," he says. "I'm amused, because I'm the kind of guy that can't even kill a mouse. The only violent thing I ever did was sue those two movie studios when they didn't pay my profits." But how would all his readers react if they knew that the father of *The Godfather* hadn't been privy to the inner councils of the Mafia Dons? "Maybe we shouldn't tell them," decides Mario Puzo.

*The Last Don* is published by William Heinemann at £15.99



And the winner of the Marion Brando lookalike contest...? Mario Puzo

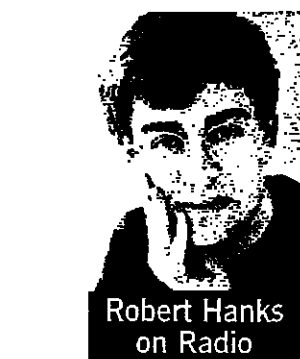
## The wall of silence – and how to get round it

At around half-past one last Tuesday afternoon, during *The World At One*, Nick Clarke was interviewing David Phillips, chief constable of Kent and chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers, on the subject of banning knives, when the line went dead.

Clarke took a very brief moment to collect himself and then explained what had happened: "I seem to have lost all communication with him. And, indeed, with everyone. [A pause.] I don't know whether anyone can hear me at all. [A longer pause.] At the moment I am in complete non-communication with everyone... At the moment I can hear no one and speak to no one. [Another pause.] At the moment, I still can't communicate with anybody. I have been cut off in my studio. There's a lot of anxiety here..."

As where is there not? As a summary of the futility of the human condition this can hardly be beaten: alone, talking into the silence, struggling to keep a hold on composure and meaning, while all the time not knowing whether the struggle has any point. None the prose a bit (and under the circumstances, it was reasonably well honed to start with: no swearing, at any rate) and it's practically text-book Beckett: I can't go on. I'll go on.

What this rather gripping incident highlighted, aside from Clarke's coolness in the face of catastrophe, was the utter isolation of the radio broadcaster, the complete disconnection from the outside world. Alone in a noiseless (and usually) windowless studio, headphones jammed on ears, the broadcaster



Robert Hanks on Radio

knows nothing but what he hears from a producer who is in turn tucked away behind glass, or down the telephone line. It's not surprising that some of them adopt such flagrant tactics to keep themselves from being spooked. Listen to the

unnatural affection of the Jamesons, clinging together in the goblin-infested night-time, or to Chris Evans and his breakfast crew yattering away, scrabbling at the encroaching silence like dogs at the back door.

Not surprising, either, that some broadcasters react to this imprisonment in unforeseen and unlikely ways – lapsing, like Scott Chisholm on Talk Radio, into solipsism. One of Chisholm's most intriguing quirks is that, when any current news story is under discussion, he magnificently pooh-poohs any version his callers may have come across: the one that he has read in his paper becomes canonical, a rock of fact in the stormy sea of opinion, simply by virtue of his having read it.

Possibly this detachment from

reality and the consequent absence of any points of reference contributes to the mild surrealism of his language, the way that imagery sometimes goes into freefall. One typical opening riff – a couple of weeks ago now; this just happened to be the one I managed to take down at the time – ran like this: the morality bandwagon rolls on... it's swept up guns and knives, and now the spotlight is on that evergreen, violence on TV... three MPs have jumped on the bandwagon, each firing a broadside at the broadcasters...

Is this a case of mixing his metaphors or just taking his clichés straight? Either way, in the public bar that is Talk Radio UK, the man has earned his stool, personally engraved tankard and bag of crisps. Prawn-flavoured would be appropriate.

## Gotta learn the langwidge

Like a thoroughbred horse, a television personality is the work of genetic engineers, the fruit of a human being's coition with a television camera. The lens's latest crush is on Ian Wright, the presenter of *Lonely Planet* (C4 Fri), a travel programme that gives you none of that piffle about tour operators and air fares. Wright works far harder to entrap than enlighten. He chats the camera up as if he's trying to get it in to bed.

If there's still such a thing as BBC English, Wright speaks what you could call ITV English, a multiple choice of regional variants. In Wright's case, it's a rubbish tip of glottal stops and Cockney elisions. He sounds and looks uncannily like Tony Parsons's kid bruvver, God, or the East End, gave them both a high-eyed, wide-eyed face and a 750-horse-power onboard motor-mouth. Signing off from Greenland, he uncharacteristically concluded that "there ain't even words that 'come close', which felt like a cop-out until he hopped off the helicopter. The chopper, with camera on board, pulled away and Wright shrank to a small speechless dot on a vast white expanse. Even from that distance, he definitely had a thing going with the lens.

There comes a point, though, when a television personality can get in the way. Gary Rhodes, not to be confused with his less telegenic namesake Cecil, returned with *Open Rhodes* (BBC2 Wed). It's as plain as mud that Rhodes's electric-chair coiff is a publicity stunt, but it does not impede his mission to give British cuisine the thumbs up – this week he was in the Highlands. Malcolm Gluck (is the surname a gimmick too?) attempted to do the same to English wine in *Gluck, Gluck, Gluck* (BBC2 Fri). "Greets you with a polite peck on the cheek," he said of a Cotswolds white, which, given his taste for hyperbole, sounded like a slap in the face.

Rhodes and Gluck are food and wine's yobbo tendency, experts hired from the wrong



Jasper Rees on Television

side of the tracks to cut the crap. No wonder this week's featured language abuse is the glottal stop. It's even caught on in the costume drama department. In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (BBC2 Sun), Helen's husband spent months on end up in town because he couldn't tolerate a wife (played by sarf Londoner Tara Fitzgerald) who habitually mistook whole areas of the alphabet. "May I no' love the sinner and hate the sin?" she asked her aunt before embarking on the disastrous union. On one of his infrequent visits to the family seat, she enjoined him to "Le me ta' my child." He promptly pinned her to the wall and tried to throttle the consonants out of her. She fled to Yorkshire, where ITV English is the lingua franca. When someone up there invited her to take tea, she said, it would "no' be possibw": she never let T pass her lips.

Richard Rayner also retreated to Yorkshire in *Travels with My Camera* (C4 Sun). A Bradford *emigre*, his mission was to apologise to his family for writing horrid novels about them. When he got there, you discovered that, while they still spoke ITV, he had switched to BBC, usually a mark of television impersonality. Of course, television personality is not the sole preserve of humans. In *Dallas Doll* (BBC2 Sat), the gaping-gobbed Sandra Bernard wormed her way into the underwear of an entire Australian family. The family sheepdog had her number, and maimed her far more effectively than any critic could ever do. Quite literally a bit part, it was still the meatiest role.

THE WEEK IN REVIEW			
David Benedict			
	GERAINT LEWIS	LAURIE LEWIS	GERAINT LEWIS
	THE PLAY	THE OPERA	THE MUSICAL
	Old Wicked Songs	Die Soldaten	Jesus Christ Superstar
overview	Jon Maran's Pulitzer-nominated play, about a blocked piano prodigy (James Callis) who learns about art, politics, suffering and joy while studying with a Viennese singing teacher (Bob Hoskins).	The British premiere of Bernd Alois Zimmermann's legendary 1965 opera for 100-plus orchestra, large cast, split stage and three film screens, directed by David Freeman and conducted by Elgar Howarth.	Gale Edwards directs, John Napier designs and Steve Balsamo and Zubin Varla star in the 25th-anniversary revival of the rock opera that put Lloyd Webber and Rice on the international map.
critical view	Paul Taylor enjoyed the performances but shook his head at a "schmalzy personal growth saga that passes for profundity". "Contrived, clumsy and emotionally hollow," agreed the <i>Telegraph</i> . "As a musical masterpiece it is beguiling," conceded the <i>Guardian</i> . "Hoskins and Callis build up a tremendous rapport," applauded the <i>FT</i> . "A blast of serious pleasure," drooled the <i>Standard</i> . "A rare experience," nodded the <i>Jewish Chronicle</i> .	Adrian Jack admitted that "there's every appeal to the audience's baser instincts... the music is far less striking than its reputation". "Fatally unsensible," argued the <i>Telegraph</i> . "Demonstrating clearly what ENO is all about and why we need it," saluted the <i>Times</i> . "Anyone concerned about the future of opera and not too prejudiced by tune-free zones should catch it," advised the <i>Standard</i> .	Edward Seckerson eulogised over "a blast. From the past. Only better." "How raw and fresh both the music and the production seem," cried the <i>Telegraph</i> . "Finally, when those exulting chords of the tremendous title song sound... <i>Superstar</i> reaches a savage high," conceded the <i>Standard</i> . "Freshness and exuberance lacking in later works... fails to convince that <i>Superstar</i> is better staged than listened to," felt the <i>Guardian</i> .
on view	Booking to March at the Gielgud Theatre, London W1 (0171-494 5065)	Tonight and 26, 28 Nov, 5, 10, 12 Dec at ENO, The Coliseum, London WC2 (0171-632 8300)	At the newly-refurbished Lyceum Theatre, London WC2 (0171-656 1803)
our view	Compared to the dramatic subtleties of Art, this is painting by numbers.	A fascinating experiment. Bouquets to the singers and orchestra.	A knockout revival.

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# Knee-high, short shrift

**THEATRE** Elsinore

Nottingham Playhouse and touring

Even with rivets intact, something is still rotten in the state of Robert Lepage's hi-tec Hamlet. By Paul Taylor

My taxi from the station to Nottingham Playhouse had to go on quite a detour because, as the driver explained, the celebrity switch-on of the Christmas street lights was taking place. My God, I thought, let's hope the celebrity isn't Robert Lepage, or they'll fuse on the spot. An unworthy notion, perhaps, but one I couldn't resist since this French-Canadian theatre wizard is in town with *Elsinore*, the solo show that had to be pulled from this year's Edinburgh Festival when a gremlin, in the shape of a faulty rivet, put the high-tech production into abort mode.

Now belatedly unveiled in Britain, *Elsinore* suggests that it is not just Lepage's rivets that are faulty. Theatre folk sometimes like to talk sentimentally of their art as constituting "two planks and a passion". With Lepage, it's more a case of "a million computer projections, an infra-red surveillance camera, an *environnement sonore*, a harness, some ersatz scenery, an optional mud bath and a passion". Nothing necessarily wrong with that. Theatre of Poverty is only one kind of theatre. But does all the technical dazzle here help take you on a journey into Hamlet's soul? No, it takes you on a scary safari into Lepage's human limitations.

Like Coleridge ("I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so...") and just about everybody else, Lepage projects himself on to this Shakespearean hero. "Isn't it an absence of blind passion that prevents Hamlet from doing what he has to do?" asks Lepage in a programme note. "Some might say this isn't the most important paradox in Hamlet's nature; but for me, it's the only one, because it's the one I share." The puerile solipsism of that is quite barking and, besides, there's surely a difference between an absence of *blind* passion and being weirdly passionless.

So what's on offer, spectacle-wise? Well, a lot of fairly familiar Lepagean tricks. His interest in making you look at things through slots and apertures – as in his production of *Coriolanus*, where, at certain crucial moments, you were allowed to see the hero's knees but not his face – is again strongly in evidence here, with the twist that, because Lepage has to be everybody in the play, these apertures now

allow for a partially visible stand-in. So when Polonius waylays Hamlet in a library (cue projections of book shelves over the three screens), we see just the legs of the stand-in Hamlet on a veering library ladder, while Lepage as Polonius jabs away to the knees. When Desmond Barritt scurried about playing both Antipholus twins in an RSC production of *The Comedy of Errors*, it was utterly in keeping with the nature of that play. But Lepage's equivalent stunts here (coming on and off from behind a screen as alternately Hamlet and Laertes in the final fencing match) create a peculiar tricky detachment that feels grotesquely at variance with the tone of this drama.

If you removed all the technicalities, Lepage's creepily affectless performance might put you in mind of someone who had gone mad and now imagined he was Peter Sellers, who had, in turn, gone mad and now imagined he was the entire cast of *Hamlet*. Playing a hero who has "that within which passeth show", Lepage paradoxically, as Sellers often did, gives you the disturbing feeling that there is nothing inside.

Watching all these hello-I-must-be-going, conceptually cross-eyed imagistic antics, with Lepage often both on-stage and backstage at the same time (courtesy of a film camera), I suddenly remembered the comedian Harry Worth's body-pressed-against-shop-window mirror-image semaphore at the start of his old TV show. Now that had a bit of feeling. The second-night audience with whom I saw *Elsinore* absolutely loved it but, with respect, I submit that the experience they enjoyed was more akin to "An Evening with David Copperfield", the magician, than an evening of serious directorial vision such as you get with a Peter Brook or a Deborah Warner.

A friend of mine made the astute remark that Cliff Richard's stage musical *Heathcliff* is already the video. *Elsinore*, if it had a bit more interactivity, would be well on the way to being its own CD Rom. At Nottingham Playhouse tonight (0115 941 9419); then touring: Newcastle Playhouse 27-30 Nov (0191-230 5151); Glasgow Tramway 3-7 Dec (0141-287 3900); Cambridge Arts Theatre 11-14 Dec (01223 503333); RNT, London 4-11 Jan (0171-928 2252)



Lepage's lunatic antics: 'like a Peter Sellers gone mad, who imagines he can play the entire cast of "Hamlet"'

Baras Kovalev / Page One

## Hair today, Dagon tomorrow

**CLASSICAL MUSIC** Samson St John's Smith Square, London

For the sake of a neat review, it would be simple to present Harry Christophers as a master of *Samson*'s powerfully dramatic music, while finding his interpretation wanting in its response to the introverted, reflective mood of the oratorio's first act. The lugubrious recitatives and indulgent speeds set for the first-act arias suggested the triumph of time over truth, or at least of time over the underlying drama of *Samson*'s imprisonment and the subjugation of his people. But Christophers' vision of the work depended on its gradual increase in tension and the development of strong characters, clearly shared by his magnificent solo team and alert continuo group.

Opinions concerning the imminent extinction of that rare breed, the intelligent singer of English Oratorio, can be checked at least while Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Thomas Randle and Michael George remain in business. Randle has developed an attractively rich, almost baritone sound-quality of late, without losing clarity in the upper reaches of his

fine tenor, or any flexibility. Here was a Samson with attitude, memorably dismissing his vengeful wife Dalila and at his heroic best in "Your Charms to Ruin Led the Way". The second-act confrontation between Randle, wearing a black leather penguin suit, and Jonathan Best's robust Harapha might almost have been stage-managed by Don King, a compelling contest between two vocal heavyweights.

Wyn-Rogers' expressive singing proved the benefit of a large, colourful voice, clearly focused and faultless in its production, to the performance of early music. Her genuinely *bel canto* delivery of "Return, O God of Hosts" highlighted the need for passionate singing in Handel, even when romantic excesses have been stripped away from the phrasing and subtlety supplants extravagance. Likewise, Michael George plumbed the emotional depths of Manoah's final aria with acute sensitivity to the text.

The telescoping and adaptation of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* by Newburgh Hamilton offers up a few poten-

tial hostages to misfortune, not least in the matter-of-fact delivery of *Samson*'s death or his parting line. "I begin to feel some inward motions, which bid me to go". Handel's audiences no doubt drew breath on hearing the news of how the Israelite destroyed the temple of Dagon and ended his life; their modern counterparts, raised on Hollywood biblical epics, may feel short-changed by the oratorio's brief, second-hand outline of *Samson*'s demise. Any want of drama here is abundantly compensated for by the dignity of Handel's music, highlighted with moving compassion by Christophers and his performers. The "Dead March", with its eerie mix of horns, kettledrums, strings and chamber organ, was raised here to the epitome of grief, a painful, very personal yet public expression of the composer's feelings. Elsewhere, the choristers of The Sixteen matched the committed singing style of the solo team, contributing powerfully to this outstanding performance.

Andrew Stewart

## Not just Texas-fried turkey

**FOLK** Guy Clark Elmwood Hall, Belfast

Guy Clark started life in a one-horse town in west Texas and, kicking off with the still definitive *Old No 1* in 1975, has thus far slipped out a taut eight albums in 21 years. This, combined with a fine line in Clint Eastwood-like "man-with-no-name" demeanour, amounts to a text-book approach to forging and maintaining a certain kind of songwriting reputation. A legion of better-known artists such as Nanci Griffith, Emmylou Harris, Vince Gill and Lyle Lovett have fêted Clark's name, guested on his albums on something close to rent-a-devotee numbers and covered his material for years. Yet the man seems doomed to play out the role of quintessential cult figure.

And a role it is, for while fellow Lone Star legend Townes Van Zandt just had to turn up (in body if not in mind) at this venue a year ago to generate an electric atmosphere, Clark had to work on stage. He obligingly donned the porous raincoat of his "living legend" status –

however ridiculous it must seem to him on a day-to-day basis – and harmlessly fortified it with wry witticisms, body language and a little gentle sparring with the audience. Where Van Zandt is a genuine wild card, a vacationing-on-Venus maverick, Clark is simply a better-than-average craftsman who never shoved his way around Nashville and always called himself a folk-singer anyway.

Whatever his generic preference, Clark proved himself a good entertainer, eliciting a warm response in a cavernous, charisma-sapping auditorium, largely used for Ulster Orchestra rehearsals. "Feels like a church in here," he mused. "Nobody throwin' stuff..."

Accompanied by his son Travis, whose superb, melodic work on the fretless bass added welcome textural depth to essentially simple chord progressions, Clark encouraged requests and got them by the bagful. His guitar playing was rudimentary and his actual guitar sound quite horrible, but when it all connected with

top-drawer material, the results were transcendent. His charged performance of debut-album perennials "Desperado Waiting for a Train" and "Let Him Roll" left their more polished interpretations standing. Alternating between Woody Guthrie-esque "talking" ballads such as the truly heart-breaking "Randall Knife" (about his own late father and the process of grief) and more lightweight-sounding numbers in the swinging, Jerry Jeff Walker idiom, there was a combination of terrific quality and the odd turkey ("Home-grown Tomatoes", anyone?) in both.

Two songs from his recent *Dublin Blues* album – "Stuff That Works" and "The Cape", a song about trying to fly as a child and progressing to the leaps of faith necessary for self-belief and betterment in later life – were disguised in throwaway tunes and constructed from disarmingly banal couplets, but they illustrated beautifully the nature of Clark's particular brand of genius.

Colin Harper



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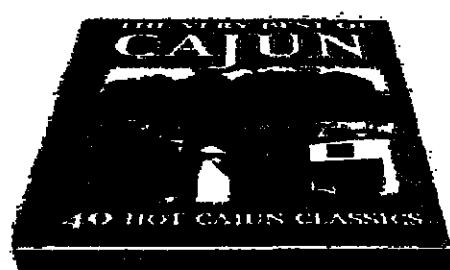
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# With God where the cuckoos sing

Jan Morris praises the turbulent poet who loves his ideal Wales and hates Brummie vowels

Furious Interiors: Wales, R. S. Thomas and God by Justin Wintle, HarperCollins, £20

It's an impertinence to say so, but I think I understand R. S. Thomas. He is an undoubted poetical genius and an Anglican priest, I am a flibbertigibbet prose-writer and a pagan pantheist, but we have things in common. Like many other Welsh persons, from Dafydd ap Gwilym to Saunders Lewis, we long ago both reached the conclusion, or perhaps the device, that we could glimpse the divine in the matter of Wales – not Wales as it is today, but a Wales with its language unthreatened, its landscapes unspoiled, its people still serene in their own beliefs and loyalties.

It was, in short, an existentialist Wales that we envisioned. Both of us, in our different ways, set out to restore it if we could, to protect what was left of it. We both became, in fact, what Justin Wintle characterises in an untypical moment of sneer as "Welsh nationalists, or patriots, or whatever else they choose to call themselves".

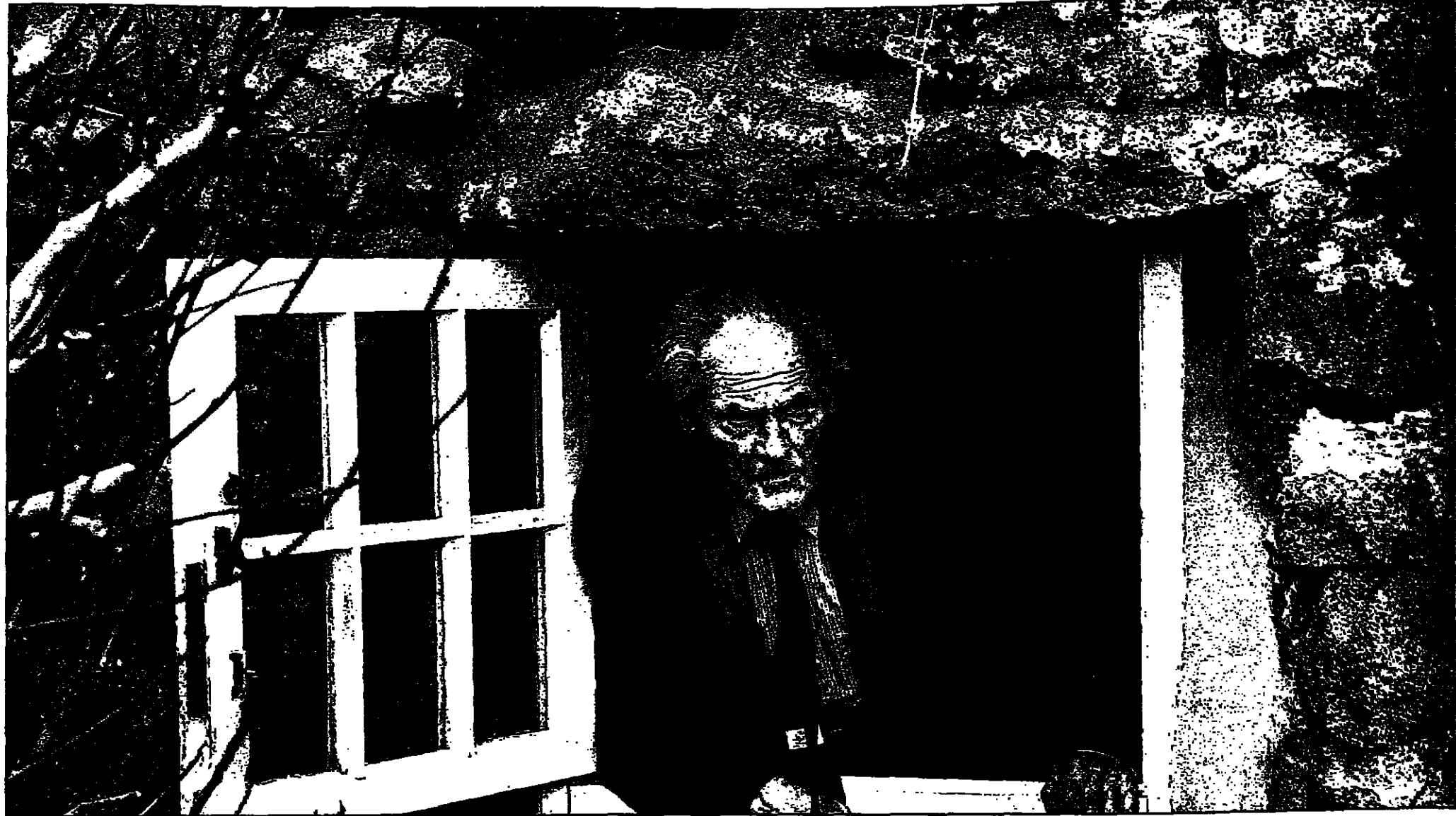
Not only Welsh people, of course, cherish this enchantment – I have heard Egyptians talk of their country in similar trance – but in Wales it is perhaps more intoxicating because of our circumstances. Ours is a place of constant torment, torn by doubt. Is it necessary to speak Welsh to be properly Welsh? When is violence, or even unpleasantness, justified to protect Welshness? Is it racist to want to keep English people out, when they are perverting the national character? Should we aim at an entirely Welsh-speaking enclave in the north-west, and let the rest go hang? What is Welshness, anyway?

At one level of his art, R. S. Thomas is the laureate of these torments. He did not learn Welsh until he was a grown man, he writes all his poetry in English, but his dream has been of an entirely Welsh-speaking society restored to its old simplicity. Wintle skilfully and sympathetically explores this preoccupation, as expressed in Thomas's verse as in his life, and in doing so exposes many a nerve in the sensibilities of people like me. R. S. Thomas says things we are ashamed of thinking.

He detests the vowel-sounds of Birmingham immigrants, and so do we. He hates tourism in almost all its forms, together with electric pylons and all manifestations of the game-show-and-lottery civilisation. He despises Welsh people who do not stand up for their language and their history, but fawningly knuckle under. He believes it is perfectly justifiable to be nasty about the English or to the English – if it will make them go away. When he looks through a "Welsh window" and declares the beauty outside to be "for the few and chosen", not for the crowd that "dirty the window with their breathing", we know just what he means.

We are perhaps ashamed, but Thomas never is. He is defending not merely his country and his culture, but his God. He is like one of the old fighting saints, born to martyrdom. If it is hypocritical for a Christian to live by *saeva indignatio*, then Christ was a hypocrite too, when he topped the tables in the temple. Thomas apparently prefers the word "Christ" to the word "Jesus": it is more flinty, more ice-like.

As one might imagine, he himself was not uni-



R. S. Thomas: "seeing the unseeable"

HOWARD HARTWELL

versally appreciated as a parish priest, holding the forthright opinions that he did. But he was assiduous in visiting the sick and the poor, however remote their farms and cottages (though perhaps a little more assiduous, it is sneakily suggested, if they happened to be Welsh-speaking). His poems are often considered, especially by English readers, as essentially nationalist works of almost incongruous beauty; but English readers do not understand the nature of our patriotism or nationalism, or whatever we choose to call it.

Nor, I think, does Justin Wintle. His analyses of Thomas's art are perceptive, and learned, and often beautifully expressed, but by the nature of things he does not share their sense of yearning and despair. He spends much time, somewhat

embarrassingly recalled, in the company of the sort of English-speaking Welshmen who call each other "boy" and talk a lot about getting pissed ("What an arsehole", says one of these friends about R. S. Thomas, "what a total arsehole"). He reports with apparent approval the responses of Welsh-speaking Welshmen who resent Thomas's more outrageous kind of patriotism. Wintle lives in Pembrokeshire, knows a great deal about Welshness and Welsh history, but patently does not experience the transcendental sense of longing that is contained in the old Welsh saying of "Abercawg, where the cuckoos sing" – an aspiration-land, a dream, a Kierkegaardian Wales of our imaginations.

I admired this book without much liking it. I thought it was fine when it bore itself as literary criticism,

often in line-by-line glossings of the poems, and fair and sensible when it turned to history or politics. But I disliked something prying about it, something almost tabloidy, when it set out to be biography. Thomas did not want a biography written and, so far as I can tell, Wintle has never met him. The book depends upon second-hand information and speculation, and this leads it into inquiries that seem to me distasteful.

"How much was true and how much false?" Wintle himself asks once. "How much tittle-tattle, and how much justified resentment?" A biographer should not be asking such questions towards the end of his book; and it is not enough to suggest, as Wintle does on the next page, that none of it much matters "compared with what he has written".

As I happens I agree, but in that case, there is not much point in writing a biography that depends so much upon hearsay. Wintle seems to me dead right, though, in the order of his sub-title – Wales, R. S. Thomas, God. I do not doubt that the course of this poet's art has taken him from Abercawg through self-examination to the profoundest revelations of all. R. S. Thomas dismisses the idea of himself as a mystic, on the grounds that his encounters with the divine have not been direct, but filtered through poetry. But I do not for a moment doubt that this great and disconcerting artist, as he looks through that grubby small window and picks up his pen to write, has seen the unseeable. For to us pantheists art itself, like Abercawg, is God.

## The American way of death

D J Taylor on the literary star who died, as he lived, in the limelight

This Wild Darkness: The Story of My Death by Harold Brodkey, Fourth Estate, £14.99

Harold Brodkey's story, propagated as much by himself as his many acolytes, is well known. The Jewish boy from the mid-west heads for New York, writes a handful of limelily promising short stories and then spends the next three decades living off his reputation. Part of this is to do with legendary powers of physical attraction (Brodkey's countless juvenile *amours* are supposed to have included a fling with Marilyn Monroe). Much more, though, has to do with an unpublished masterpiece – the subject of fevered press and party gossip – whose composition takes up the greater part of its author's adult life.

What follows is a savage parable of literary ambition. *The Runaway Soul*, finally presented to the critics in 1991, gets indifferent notices. To the indignity of not being acclaimed as a genius (a second novel, *Profane Friendship*, does no better) is added serious illness, belatedly diagnosed as AIDS.

*This Wild Darkness*, completed shortly before Brodkey's death in January of this year, assembles a number of fragmentary impressions from the last three years of his life. Hospitalisation, diagnosis, rural interludes in upstate New York, a trip to Venice, some valedictory remarks. In life Brodkey's subject was himself, and it wasn't to be expected that death would change the habit of a lifetime. This is not a cheap shot. Brodkey's mission, projected through 40 years or so of contributions to the *New Yorker*, was to prove both to neutral onlookers and himself that he was a great writer: The story of his death, inevitably, is a desperate final grab for the laurel wreath – part defiance, part bluster and nearly all narcissism.

The sheer scope of Brodkey's self-love may come as a shock to anyone who hasn't previously witnessed the spectacle of an American literary lion preening himself in public. There is, for instance, his habit of considering people mostly

in terms of their relation to himself (his wife gets apostrophised as "My human credential"); there are the sexual look-backs ("I cannot find in memory a day in my life without some... 'na or other'"), not to mention some over-cooked epigrams about the human condition: "Life is a kind of horror"; "History is a scandal, as are life and death."

One tries to remember, while reading this nonsense, that these are the thoughts of a desperately sick man dying from an illness whose implications and – Brodkey being Brodkey – mythical properties hung over every moment of his waking life. But one ought also to bear in mind that Brodkey wrote it for publication and that he undoubtedly regarded it as a testimony to his ideals and beliefs.

This isn't to condemn the resulting 177 pages out of hand, or to ignore the inability of the author to answer back. For when Brodkey gets onto the subject of his rural hideaway, figures

from his childhood, shared confidences with his wife and doctor (an immensely decent-sounding man named Barry) or some of the differences between Britain and America – whenever he can stop talking about himself in fact – there are moments of awful clarity. Watching part of a bird's flight arc, for instance, "I feel myself shiver and swiftly break into clusters of flight. Sometimes the wind seems to enter me."

At bottom, though, *This Wild Darkness* is simply another of the many 20th-century exercises in benefit of clergy. Its sub-text, baldly stated, is that one is – or should be – allowed to do pretty much as one likes because one is an artist.

At times Brodkey makes this point directly, as when he tells his wife that "We are cowards and artists and are in flight and are and have to be awful people to get our work done", or decides that "a writer is alone, is a sacrificial beast and madman (or madwoman) and fool". To which you want to retort that no genuine artist ever lost

anything by behaving like an ordinary person, and that even Proust presumably breathed the same air as his fellow Parisians.

There is a grimmer truth on display here, however. That is the complete inability of this post-modern, milk-and-water humanism, this refined, urban, liberal sensibility, to come to terms with the simple fact of mortality. Diagnosed as terminally ill, Brodkey records "What was strange was that all sense of presence, all sense of poetry and style, all sense of idea left me".

But what is strange about not being able to bring a sense of style to your own death? Enmeshed in the world of Manhattan literary parties and *New Yorker* back-scratching (at which he characteristically rails), Brodkey lost touch with the notion of ordinariness at a very early stage in his career. Now that it is over, the temptation to mark him down as another literary casualty laid low by a particular kind of urban artistic life is irresistible.

## Magnificent Father mine, that pony does not come

Sue Gaisford contrasts surly sons and doting dads

Sons & Mothers edited by Matthew and Victoria Glendinning, Virago, £16.99

Fathers: An Anthology edited by Louise Guinness, Chatto, £16.99

Women tell me," writes Michael Bywater, "that the joy and delight in having produced a male child, something so different from them, can in time be partially or even wholly overwhelmed by the sheer horror of having produced... something so different." These women could be right. Victoria Glendinning produced four male children, of whom one, Matthew, has helped her compile an anthology about having – and being – a son. Their two essays provide uneasy book-ends to the varied, often embarrassingly frightful accounts of joy, delight and sheer horror within.

Bywater is one of the few sons to face up to the pitfalls of the whole endeavour. Men, he says, mine motherhood as the fount and origin of life and its troubles. His essay struggles to correct the balance,

unlike the nasty little cameo by Jon Snow, who seems to have preferred his nanny. His notorious revelation that his mother wore a wig is little to be ashamed of, in the context of his other remarks.

The mother-contributors, on the other hand, write with careful rapture and a vivid awareness that their sons could hold it all against them if there is any suggestion of complaint. They can't help it. As Kate Saunders explains: "Anyone who doubts the effects of having a male child on the mother's lobes has only to look at Mrs T. Her one vulnerable place is her boy. When the idiotic Mark got lost in the desert we were treated to the sight of our First Citizen as a weeping old Mum".

This book contains some good, brisk writing – by Saunders and Bywater and also by Adam Mars-Jones and Jan Dal-

ley: it offers some bizarrely fascinating experiences recounted by Michael Seed and Phineas Foster, and some excruciating poetry by Spike Milligan and Jill Dawson. There is also a fair amount of self-indulgent claptrap. "It has been incredibly worthwhile", Ms Glendinning enthuses. For her, maybe.

Infinitely better value, in every sense, is Louise Guinness's anthology of fathers. This is a glorious book, every page offering new delights. It ranges in time from Homer to Heaney, in expression from doting rapture to murderous fury, in scope from Rabelais to Peter Rabbit, in emotion from ecstasy to howling grief – and a good deal of it is very funny. Take Angela Carter, remembering her father coming into a room announcing "Enter the fairy singing and dancing and waving

her wooden leg". Take Maurice Baring's version of Goneril's letter to Regan complaining about their old Dad, who insists on tiresomely quoting Cordelia: "and you well remember, darling, that when Cordelia was here Papa could not endure the sight of her". Or take Piero de'Medici wheedling a present out of his heroic sire Lorenzo: "Magnificent Father mine, that pony does not come."

Traditionally, reviewers of anthologies hunt out those entries we think should be there and grumble if they are not. I looked for one that I thought only I had discovered: the section of his diary that lovingly records the astonishing intellectual achievements of John Evelyn's little son, who had just died. It's there. I stopped searching for lacunae and simply revelled. The book is divided loosely into 11 sec-

tions, and some parents crop up in several. Thackeray boasts about his little fat Annie and, later, Annie returns the compliment. Hazlitt appears both as precocious son and anxious father. Darwin is a particular favourite, at first making detailed notes on his baby's progress, observing the first evidence of reflexes and emotions – and then finding, as Guinness remarks, that his scientific brain is fractionally disabled by helpless tenderness. When, in a later chapter, we discover that the child has died, we appreciate that the Darwins "have lost the joy of the household and the solace of our old age".

One of the most pleasing aspects of the book is this new light that it sheds on men who are famous for achievements other than fatherhood. There is Cato making sure he is with his children at bath-time;

Henry Miller walking six miles to a hot spring to wash his babies' nappies; Rousseau having trouble with his daughter ("I can be President of the United States or I can control Alice. I cannot possibly do both."); Kipling despairingly searching for comfort after his only son was killed in the trenches; William Temple noting glumly in his diary: "Holidays too long."

Louise Guinness's own father died when she was 12. In her introduction she writes movingly of her memories of him. A gentle, scholarly, humorous man, he was the only Oxford undergraduate both to have taken ballet lessons and played rugby for his college. She finds it impossible even to imagine any faults in him, and she has never stopped missing him. She could scarcely have paid him a handsomer tribute than this book.

## Blox in J

Michael Arditt Shakespeare's

Woe Shakespeare by Arditt

The Merchant of Venice Shakespeare's, never intrigued by the 1980s Gregory Doran's Sol

lock not as "the most impene but "the most impenetrable of can a fluffed line have prove remarks, "we've been togeth

In 1994, Sher and Doran group that visited South Afric sons in the emerging democ such as their status as an "ou single invitation to Sher to a great success and particu country for England at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg of *Woe Shakespeare* inspired the following year with a Shakes Their choice of *Time And* agement, who would have p lems for the audience and p at one remove, it poses p Sher's previous theatrical fo focused on the familiar figur is barely known. There have this century. Peter Brook's rah Warner's with Brian Co reader's prior knowledge in interpretation.

## Judgin

Donald Camer

Nuremberg, The Last Battle

David Irving has become investigation, a by-word yards in favour of Hitler refers to those who conspire tors. He has spoken of Hitler challenged historians to coe cence that Hitler knew of, k elimination of European Jew circulated the work of that self-styled "experts" who b physical evidence of the exten in the German-speaking part lent his support and spoken

## The do

John Campbe

Enoch Powell: A Biography

In a parliamentary career Powell served in government years and in the Cabinet for a period of about six years "rivers of blood" spe used those words) in April more attention, analysis, a than any figure in British poli and Margaret Thatcher.

He is credited with making Minister and then unmaking anticipating the central elev – liberal economics combined alism – at least a decade he stumbled on them. He has a ject of more biographies than, from Andrew Roth and flush of his notoriety to Pating celebration in 1989. So the reader may wonder why cially as Robert Shepherd's edit of Powell's own papers, life.

The answer is precisely th is now the stuff of history, a sm. Under the 30 year rule to 1964 are open. Year by year the rule allows the previous rock pools of living memory explored. Thus the whole of terial career is now exposed the Treasury under Peter Th minating in their resignation lie spending, later seen by T as the seminal moment in the eticism, but also his consid stant (1960-2) as the most Health between Aneurin Clarke. Since he never held of ing to serve Sir Alec Dougl Record Office has nothing Powell (except, perhaps, b tried to neutralise him).

Second, Shepherd has b servative, Party archive up ceased to be a member. I the Shadow Cabinet minute chart his growing alienation wider range of papers than in explosive manner of his Bir his exile in the wilder shore he dwelled in a thickening theories (compounded by fuc ern Ireland) for the rest of his hard material for the middle now available, Shepherd, a



سكرا من الاصل

# Blood and guts in Johannesburg

Michael Arditti reports on mayhem on and off stage as Shakespeare's shocker plays in South Africa

Woza Shakespeare! by Antony Sher and Gregory Doran, Methuen, £16.99

The *Merchant of Venice* was not one of Freud's favourite Shakespeares, nevertheless he would have surely been intrigued by the 1987 Stratford performance in which Gregory Doran's Solanio described Antony Sher's Shylock not as "the most impenetrable cur that ever kept with men," but "the most impenetrable cur that ever slept with men". Rarely can a fluffed line have proved so prophetic: for, as Doran wryly remarks, "we've been together ever since".

In 1994, Sher and Doran were part of a National Theatre group that visited South Africa to hold workshops and discussions in the emerging democracy. In spite of incidental irritants, such as their status as an "out couple" being disregarded in the single invitation to Sher to meet Prince Edward, the trip was a great success and particularly poignant for Sher, who left the country for England at the age of 19. They arranged with the Market Theatre, Johannesburg, whose legendary production of *Woza Albert* inspired the title of this memoir, to return the following year with a Shakespeare play.

Their choice of *Titus Andronicus* posed problems for the management, who would have preferred *Macbeth*. It posed problems for the audience and played to 25 per cent houses. And, at one remove, it poses problems for the reader: for, unlike Sher's previous theatrical journal, *The Year of the King*, which focused on the familiar figure of Richard III, *Titus Andronicus* is barely known. There have been only two major productions this century: Peter Brook's with Laurence Olivier and Deborah Warner's with Brian Cox. So the authors cannot rely on the reader's prior knowledge to sustain interest in the minutiae of interpretation.

They compensate by concentrating on the events surrounding the production. Doran as director chose *Titus* not simply because it offered a whopping part for Sher as star but for its relevance to the climate of violence in contemporary South Africa (a photographer on the original National Theatre visit witnessed a casual murder close to his hotel). As they come up against financial chicanery, administrative inefficiency and public hostility, the mood shifts from Shakespearian tragedy to the comedy of Evelyn Waugh and William Boyd.

The cast's enthusiasm can be excessive. The actress playing Lavinia (Titus's daughter) decides, after lengthy research, that her reaction to an off-stage rape would be an on-stage miscarriage in a scene in which she does not officially appear. It is enough to make even the most radical Shakespearian pine for the Beryl Reid "let's start with the right shoes" approach. The description of the technical rehearsals belongs as much to military history as theatrical record, with faulty lines of communication (essential props not found, the Lighting Designer fled), bush-warfare (sniping in the press), feigned attacks and tactical explosions (from the director) and the final push to victory.

The modern-dress production attracted great controversy in South Africa, above all on account of its accents. One sympathises with Sher's mother who wanted to show off her son, the English Shakespearian, only to find him playing an African: one sympathises somewhat less with the letter-writer who "could not abide the excruciating experience of the ugly accents of Southern Africa abusing some of the most beautiful language ever written"; one sympathises not at all with the critic who,



A whopping part for Renaissance man: Antony Sher and Jennifer Woodburne in *Titus Andronicus*

STUART MURPHY

objecting to Sello Maake ka Ncube as an unusually complex Aaron, declared that he would prefer to see a white actor blacked up.

The narrative is shared between the two writers in alternate diary entries, a technique similar to the exchange of letters in Sher's novel, *Cheap Lives*. And yet this fails to create as effective a contrast as might have been hoped. Apart from their different perspectives in rehearsal, both their viewpoints and voices are remarkably similar. Even after those passages in which professional tension gives way to domestic violence – Doran describes the "conversation with the flying plates" in a way that would be anathema to Michael Denison and Dulcie Gray –

peace is re-established at the expense of literary tension.

But then, although the book has two authors, it has one real subject: Sher. He is the senior partner, the Renaissance man both on and off stage, whose drawings add a further dimension to the story. Doran's return to his home country, Yorkshire, is acknowledged when the production tours in England, but it is Sher's return to his home country that takes centre-stage. Indeed, the book is most effective as a documentary counterpoint to the fictional explorations of South African identity in Sher's novels, spiced with a black humour worthy of Shakespeare's own, as when the mutilated Albie Sachs dryly remarks of the show: "It's not a play for amputees!"

## Judging the judges

Donald Cameron Watt convicts a maverick historian of meanness and myopia

Nuremberg, *The Last Battle* by David Irving, Focal Point, £25

David Irving has become, in part at his own instigation, a by-word for historical propaganda in favour of Hitler and his regime. He refers to those who conspired to kill Hitler as traitors. He has spoken of Hitler as his hero. He has challenged historians to come up with hard evidence that Hitler knew of, let alone ordered, the elimination of European Jewry. He has privately circulated the work of that curious collection of self-styled "experts" who have tried to deny the physical evidence of the extermination camps. And in the German-speaking parts of Europe he has lent his support and spoken publicly at rallies of

those normally referred to as neo-Nazis. Hence Irving has become the target of a widespread and successful campaign to shut the doors of established British and American publishing houses against him. Focal Point, the publishers of this latest book, is David Irving himself, and operates out of his own house.

Yet alongside Irving the propagandist exists Irving the indefatigable researcher, a man who has in the past been generous in sharing his enormous knowledge of the Nazi records with other scholars who do not share his idiosyncratic (to be polite) views. Some of his books have been major con-

tributions to knowledge. Although disagreeing with him profoundly on his views on the nature of the Nazi regime, I have observed the failure of most of those who tried to challenge him to match his encyclopaedic knowledge and admired his capacity to come up with new and original material.

But this is not one of Irving's better books. It is marked with a meanness of spirit in his unwillingness to acknowledge the detailed work on the trial of the surviving Nazi leadership at Nuremberg in 1946 by the US historian Bradley Smith or by John and Ann Tusa from Britain. As with his book on Hitler's foreign policy before 1939, Ir-

ving's mastery of the German sources is matched by his complete lack of any frame of reference for the policies which underlay the decision to stage a large public trial of the Nazi leadership.

In his effort to discredit prosecutors and judges, Irving misses the ironies in the Americans' advancement of the notion of conspiracy – an Anglo-Saxon doctrine that offers the sole exception to the assumption of innocence until guilt is proven. If a conspiracy is proven, then the accused have to prove they were not part of it. This shocked both the French and the Soviet jurists.

There can be no doubt that there had to be a

trial. There can be little doubt that the hands of the countries judging were less than lily-white. There can be no doubt that the verdict had been largely arrived at before the evidence was assembled. Yet with the exception of the Nazi anti-semitic pornographer, Streicher, a man so unpleasant of character that the other defendants shunned him, the sentences passed were richly deserved. Above all, the evidence destroyed any possibility of a war-guilt controversy like that which followed the first world war. Democracy in Germany was reborn, free of the guilt of surrender. It proved to be a much stronger plant than anyone expected.

## The doom of the prophet

John Campbell follows a lost leader into self-inflicted exile

Enoch Powell: A Biography by Robert Shepherd, Hutchinson, £25

In a parliamentary career of 37 years, Enoch Powell served in government for just over four years and in the Cabinet for only 15 months. Yet for a period of about six years following his notorious "rivers of blood" speech (not that he ever used those words) in April 1968, he commanded more attention, analysis, adulation and exorcism than any figure in British politics between Churchill and Margaret Thatcher.

He is credited with making Ted Heath Prime Minister and then unmaking him again; and with anticipating the central elements of Thatcherism – liberal economics combined with English nationalism – at least a decade before the Lady herself stumbled on them. He has already been the subject of more biographies than most Prime Ministers, from Andrew Roth and Paul Foot in the first flush of his notoriety to Patrick Cosgrave's admiring celebration in 1989. So as he slips into history the reader may wonder why we need another, especially as Robert Shepherd does not have the benefit of Powell's own papers. This is not the official life.

The answer is precisely that the bulk of his career is now the stuff of history, as opposed to journalism. Under the 30-year rule the Cabinet papers up to 1964 are open. Year by year, like a receding tide, the rule allows the previously hidden crevices and rock pools of living memory to be systematically explored. Thus the whole of Powell's brief ministerial career is now exposed: not only his year at the Treasury under Peter Thorneycroft, 1957-8, culminating in their resignation on the issue of public spending, later seen by Thatcherite mythology as the seminal moment in the rediscovery of monetarism; but also his considerably more important stint (1960-3) as the most creative Minister of Health between Aneurin Bevan and Kenneth Clarke. Since he never held office again after refusing to serve Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the Public Record Office has nothing more to reveal about Powell (except, perhaps, how later governments tried to neutralise him).

Second, Shepherd has had access to the Conservative Party archive up to 1975 (when Powell ceased to be a member), including most crucially the Shadow Cabinet minutes from 1964-70. These chart his growing alienation from Heath on a much wider range of issues than immigration, until the explosive moment of his Birmingham speech and his exile to the wilder shores of populism, where he dwelled in a thickening mist of conspiracy theories (compounded by further exile to Northern Ireland) for the rest of his career. With all this hard material for the middle years of Powell's life now available, Shepherd, as a serious historian,

quite rightly concentrates on what he can document: the "River Tiber" speech comes three quarters of the way through the book.

Shepherd is steeped in this material, having covered much of the same ground only two years ago in his equally good biography of Powell's friend and rival, Iain Macleod. The problem that any biographer has with Powell, however, is getting into his mind. Powell is not an ordinary politician but (almost uniquely in high-level politics) a true intellectual. There are plenty of highly educated people, but that is different: Powell is an intellectual in that he is genuinely fascinated (and led astray) by ideas. No biographer will really crack Enoch Powell who cannot follow him into the three areas of detailed textual scholarship which have excited his intellectual passion over his 84 years.

First, from his school days onwards he edited and translated Herodotus, becoming Professor of Greek at 24; years later Lord Hailsham, who prided himself on his knowledge of the classics, found that Powell could always cap him. Second, Powell fell in love at the age of 15 with the German language and German romanticism: Goethe, Heine and above all Nietzsche. Hitler disillusioned him equally abruptly, but 50 years later his eight records on *Desert Island Discs* were all German (four of them Wagner).

Third, he is obsessed with minute analysis and interpretation of the New Testament, an obsession which Shepherd reveals he inherited from his mother (who taught herself Greek in order to clear up some theological point) and which culminated only two years ago in the publication of his bizarre theory that Jesus was not crucified but stoned to death. He has also taught himself medieval Welsh, written a history of the medieval House of Lords and published three volumes of poems. All this Shepherd duly recounts, but he cannot be said to make biographical sense of it. Maybe Simon Heffer (the next biographer in line) will crack it, but more likely the task is impossible.

The great paradox of Powell, a man who lives for paradox, is that his famously logical intellect is actually the slave of his emotions. He suffers Pauline conversions with the regularity of Mr Toad. Every few years his whole belief system is turned upside down by a new passion which entirely overthrows the old. Horrified by the Roehm purge, he renounced his love of Germany overnight. Abandoning the idea of a musical career, he went to the opposite extreme and abjured music altogether. Militantly atheistic as a boy, he dramatically rediscovered Christianity (or his own highly individual interpretation of it) on Easter Sunday, 1950.

He fell in love with India during the war and went into politics to save the British Empire. As late as 1954 he was still asserting that Britain without the Empire was nothing, only to reverse that faith too and turn all his powers of local demolition on ridiculing his party's imperial delusions. In each case it was not simply that he changed his mind, but that he changed it so diametrically, so vehemently, so emotionally.

His subsequent brilliantly argued, but invariably negative crusades – against coloured immigration, European integration, nuclear deterrence, the American alliance and any hint of compromise in Northern Ireland – all stemmed from his traumatic rejection of empire and the adoption in its place of an impossibly idealised notion of English national identity. On every item of this bizarrely disparate checklist Powell had a case.

It was quite right that politicians should face up to the unanticipated social transformation wrought by immigration; and Heath was not candid about the federalist implications of the Treaty of Rome (neither was Thatcher about the Single European Act). But in every instance Powell's credibility was damaged, first by his having previously argued the opposite with equal passion and then by his self-indulgent taste for blood curdling overstatement. While constantly invoking a mystical Englishness, he has the very un-English temperament of a religious fanatic. He overlooks the true British genius for illogicality, compromise and muddling through.

He was most consistent, most prophetic and perhaps most influential on economics. Certainly much of what he was mocked for advocating in the 1960s – free markets, privatisation, limited government – became reality in the 1980s (not only in Britain, but around the world). But even here he did not practice his own principles. As Minister of Health, he not only planned the most ambitious hospital programme in the history of the NHS, but enforced Selwyn Lloyd's incomes policy against the nurses with a ferocious rigidity which appalled his colleagues.

History will remember Enoch as an ascetic half-mad hermit forever prophesying national doom at the hands of Pakistanis, Americans, Eurocrats and Irish (abetted by the treacherous Foreign Office). He deserves some credit as a guru of market economics, John the Baptist to Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher. But he destroyed most of that credit by his loony extremism on other subjects. Robert Shepherd has written a first class account of an extraordinary career. But, when the dazzling detonations of Powell's pyrotechnics have faded, all that remains is a whiff of sulphur.

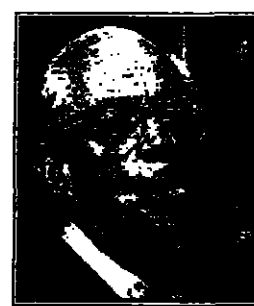
### In next week's books pages

Books of the Year from Malcolm Bradbury, Barbara Cartland, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, Roy Foster, Penelope Fitzgerald, Jan Morris, Ned Sherrin, D J Taylor, and Barbara Trapido. Plus Charles Nicholl on Malcolm Lowry's Letters, Robin Cook on the Literary Companion to Parliament and John Campbell on Henrik Ibsen.



Festive spirits: a 12-page guide to seasonal recipes flavoured with alcohol from Britain's top chefs. Plus, Richard Ehrlich and panel test 25 bottles of bubbly and choose their five favourites

A friend of Margaret Thatcher, Rupert Murdoch and the Queen Mum, how far does Lord Wyatt of Weeford's influence stretch? Or is he just good at parties? Geraldine Bedell finds out



Michael Flatley and 'Riverdance' turned Irish dancing into a global industry. Then everything turned sour. Both sides of the Riverdance row tell their story for the first time to Matthew Sweet

IN THIS WEEKEND'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



## Paperbacks



By Christopher Hirst  
and Lucasta Miller

**The Faber Book of Pop** edited by Hanif Kureishi and Jon Savage (Faber, £14.99) Though it runs to 860 large pages, this great lump of a book contains remarkably little good writing about pop (Stanley Booth on the Stones and Michael Braun on the Beatles are notable exceptions.) Unfathomably, the editors include a four-page gripe by Paul Johnson from 1964, but Leiber and Stoller, pop's finest songwriters, only appear in one passing reference. Similarly, there are extended extracts from such well-known posters as Norman Mailer, Joan Didion and William S. Burroughs but nothing from Ian Hunter's acclaimed *Diary of a Rock Star* or George Melly's incomparable *On the Edge*.

**Harvest of the Cold Months** by Elizabeth David (Penguin, £15) Though bearing the imprint of the "Penguin Cookery Library", it is hard to imagine anyone using this learned history of frosty foodstuffs to whip up a dinner-party finale. Mrs David notes that ices first emerged in the Florentine Renaissance (handy for hiding poisons) and Louis XIV was fond of a sorbet, while excellent Russian ice-cream, made from eggs and cream, was available even in the mid-Sixties. The patron-saint of foodies shows an occasional frostiness herself, remarking on the rarity of ice-cubes in Italy. "The Tuscan addiction to ice is a thing of the past."

**The Letters of Dorothy L. Sayers** edited by Barbara Reynolds (Sceptre, £7.99) Charting her progress from jolly hockey-sticks schoolgirl to celebrated author of detective fiction, these letters take Dorothy L. Sayers up to the age of 37. The writing is energetic and observant – but there are no emotional outpourings here. So stiff is Sayers's upper lip that when confessing to having given birth in secret to an illegitimate son, her attitude towards the "little chap" (then three weeks old) seems frighteningly unfeeling: "it doesn't do to nurse him or pet him too much, or he'll keep you at it all day and night. He's accustomed to be stuck in bed when he yowls and taken no notice of."

**Imagining Characters: Six Conversations about Women Writers** by A S Byatt and Ighes Sode (Vintage, £7.99) The author of *Possession* joins forces with psychoanalyst Ighes Sode in a series of gossipy discussions about classic novels. Now that literary theory has become the orthodoxy, it's refreshing to find a couple of intelligent critics who take such pleasure in talking about the characters in books as though they were real people. The chosen texts are Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and George Eliot's *David Copperfield*, plus novels by Willa Cather, Iris Murdoch and Toni Morrison. Though intellectually flawed in some of its assumptions, this is enjoyable lit crit, jargon-free and bursting with enthusiasm.

**Misogynies** by Joan Smith (Vintage, £9.99) Originally published in 1989, Joan Smith's incisive collection of essays has lost none of its punch – in fact, it is fast becoming a feminist classic. Whether she's discussing the patriarchal bias of Ancient Historians (she rescues Catullus's girlfriend Lesbia from their dismissive spite) or the sexist assumptions behind such quintessential Eighties movies as *Jagged Edge* and *Fatal Attraction*, Smith approaches her subjects with a blend of intelligence, polemicism and humour. Her literary criticism is spot-on.

**NEW AUTHORS**  
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"The specific details of tombs – the inscriptions, souvenirs and photographs, flowers and wreaths placed on the graves, the wrought iron and stained glass, as well as all the sculpture – are what I call traces of immortality." David Robinson spent two years photographing the romantically wistful, often bizarre, memorial stones erected to commemorate the departed in cemeteries all over Europe. In *Passy*, he encountered this stone greyhound, listening for the return of the Beauregard family. Other pictures show weeping angels, a stone dinner party in full swing and a choir of banjo-strumming cherubs. The result, *Beautiful Death*, published by Penguin Studio (£20), with a foreword by bestselling novelist, Dean Koontz, is an eccentric, occasionally rather grim reminder, of the fine and private place, and its less private accoutrements, that await us all.

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID ROBINSON

## Episodes of casualty

Hugo Barnacle regrets an excessive body count

*The Night in Question* by Tobias Wolff, Bloomsbury, £15.99

Tobias Wolff is writer-in-residence at Syracuse University in New York State. This is surprising. Syracuse, you'll recall, is the place where the English department is so politically correct that the phone book is a set text while Shakespeare study is optional. Why on earth have they hired a distinguished short-story writer like Wolff instead of some crackhead graffiti artist? Perhaps one of those wealthy foundations, whom Wolff thanks for their support in a prefatory note to his new collection, had some say in the matter.

At any rate it is a job you might prefer to avoid if you made much in the way of normal commercial gain from writing. Similarly the narrator of the first story here, "Mortals", having published "a few stories in literary journals that nobody read, including me", becomes a newspaper obituarist. "After four months of this duty I was full of the consciousness of death. It soured me. It puffed me up with morbid snobbery, the feeling that I

knew a secret nobody else had even begun to suspect."

As it happens, our man gets the sack for writing an obit on someone who phones in the news of his own death for reasons of vanity and then complains so that no one will guess at his subterfuge. Elsewhere in the collection, though, actual unexaggerated demises are a shade too prevalent, almost as if a morbid snobbery were indeed at work. A novel can include death and still be about much else besides, but a death in a short story becomes the dominant, shaping force.

In "Flyboys", two ingenious small boys dig their friend's stepfather's pickup out of some mud when it gets bogged down. Looming over this account, for no terribly apparent purpose, is a Salingeresque recollection of the friend's wonderfully gifted, charismatic older brother, killed on a motorcycle years before.

In "The Other Miller", an army private is told his mother has died and given compassionate leave. He sets



Tobias Wolff: "morbid"

off, smugly certain the message was meant for another man in the battalion who shares the same name and initials. "The Army screws up their mail all the time, and now they've screwed this up." He is happy to exploit his unexpected liberty anyway, till leaving camp he realises "a sim-

ple truth. His mother is also going to die." And we are rather led to assume that in fact she has.

Miller is a present-day volunteer, who signed up to punish his mother for remarrying after his father was killed to death in a bizarre accident. "Casualty" deals with conscripts in Vietnam, one of whom, irked by a new officer and sarcastic by nature, keeps volunteering for dangerous duty: "Love to... Really, sir? Can I?" And keeps getting sent, since the officer has no sense of humour.

Obviously, with just a few weeks of his tour left, the wisecracker has to get killed, but to make things still more ironic Wolff has it happen while he's on routine duty in a supposedly safe area. This creaks ever so slightly. It ought to creak like a falling redwood, but Wolff's writing is measured and deft enough to muffle the effect.

In "Bullet in the Brain" – something of a giveaway title, one can't help feeling – there's another character who has trouble keeping his mouth shut, "a book critic known for

the weary, elegant savagery with which he dispatched almost everything he reviewed", who finds himself in the middle of a bank robbery and taunts the raiders for their clichéd use of tough-guy language. Probably in life he'd be pistol-whipped but here, of course, he gets shot, and dies recalling the poetic grammatical slip a friend once made during a baseball game.

The best stories seem to be the non-death ones dealing with early youth: "Smorgasbord", a prep-school story with an acutely rendered adolescent sense of "pure possibility"; and "Powder", in which a father drives through snowdrifts to deliver his son to his tetchy estranged wife on time and so save his access rights. "Like a speedboat, only better", thinks the son. "You can't go downhill in a boat...if you haven't driven fresh powder, you haven't driven." But there are several others which also repay in spades the minimal effort of reading Wolff's well-turned, economical prose.

## Household hints from jilted lovers

Susie Boyt listens to family secrets

*Selected Stories* by Alice Munro, Chatto, £16.99

The 23 tales in Alice Munro's latest book are all drawn from collections that span the last 30 years of this distinguished Canadian writer's career. Many of the stories are built around quiet and only slightly out of the ordinary events. They almost all involve the kind of daily struggles that family life entails when it is at its most poignant.

In "Walker Brothers Cowboy" we're shown a young country girl's view of her failing travelling salesman father as he takes her and her younger brother on an innocent visit to a woman who is obviously an old flame. Another story shows a woman grappling with feelings and memories as she visits her father in hospital and learns that he has not long to live. "The Progress of Love" has at its heart a daughter's belief that the most powerful expression of love she had ever witnessed was the time her father did not prevent her impoverished mother setting fire to \$3000, a legacy from the mother's own detested father.

Many jilted women feature here: "I had my cake baked...I was in my wedding dress" reveals Aunt Dodie in "The Ottawa Valley". Helen Louise in "Postcard" whose long-time boyfriend returns from a family holiday married to someone else, finds herself feeling for the first time in their romance that "she wanted to reach out my hands and touch you." The drama often stems from a complex shifting of sensibilities in the characters, and from their growing awareness of the weight of the secrets they hold.

Many of Munro's stories end with the appearance of an important and clear truth that seems surprising, but often lets us know that the story was about something slightly different from what we thought. Because of this, they often close on a tantalising note, ending with so much potential for future meaning that it seems as though the author leaves the story just when things that would deeply affect the lives of its characters have come into play. I suppose at these points I wished one or two of them had turned into novels.

My two favourites in this collection were

"Material" and "Friend of my Youth", both of which show Munro creating situations which are not only fully imagined and completely realised but interesting in every aspect, giving the impression that if they hadn't been written there would be a real need for them.

In "Material" a woman takes us back to an apartment she lived in with her first husband, the writer, Hugo Johnson, where her role was "to throw herself between him and the world." She tells us all about Doty, the woman who lived downstairs who was a prostitute, and whom she grows to value as a friend. One night her husband's refusal to switch on a water pump during a storm results in the flooding of Doty's rooms, which seems unspeakably cruel to his wife. Although she might have taken responsibility for turning on the pump herself, "as a patient, realistic woman, a really married woman would have done", she does not, and this failure on both of their parts leads to a marriage guidance counsellor who directly pronounces them incompatible.

Years later, she finds her ex-husband has written a story about Doty, in which their slatternly, oppressed neighbour is "lifted out of life and held in the light, suspended in the marvellous clear jelly that Hugo has spent all his life learning how to make." She is greatly touched and during dinner with her present husband, Gabriel, and her daughter decides to write Hugo a letter to say so. Yet when she starts to write, the words that come out are quite different: "This is not enough Hugo. You think it is, but it isn't. You are mistaken, Hugo." Although Hugo's story seems to have love at its heart, as it enables their poor neighbour and helps her modest life "pass into art", what is this worth compared to saving her things from being ruined by rain?

Gabriel's respect for her unhappiness suddenly distinguishes him, and her earlier wondering about whether it was merely his Romanian accent that made her fall for him evaporates and is replaced by something much more solid and enduring.

## Sexual intercourse began in 1967

Patricia Craig watches the green turn blue

*The Irish Eros* edited by David Marcus, Gill & Macmillan, £14.99

Purely erotic writing does not come naturally to the modern Irish" wrote Vivian Mercer in 1962, in *The Irish Comic Tradition*. He felt impelled to add that readers might well regard that remark as the greatest understatement in his entire book. It wasn't a new perception. Elizabeth Bowen, in her introduction to the 1946 edition of Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*, had commented on the innate sexlessness of Irish literature. Even major writers (such as Flann O'Brien) either shied away from the topic, or approached it very gingerly. Catholic puritanism was largely to blame for this state of affairs, or non-affairs. The Irish Censorship Board ensured the suppression of everything it lumped together under the heading of "Evil Literature". Evil literature, as is well known, included most of the riches of mid-20th-century Irish writing.

David Marcus reminds us in his introductory note to this anthology that, with the 1967 Censorship of Publications Bill, "thousands of books were automatically unbanned". Irish readers then experienced something akin to multiple literary orgasm with virtually no foreplay. Along with other freedoms in the social sphere, in other words, exposure to sex on the page perhaps came too suddenly and went to the nation's head. Now, 30 years on, the time seems right to assess the partial secularisation and eroticisation of Irish society.

Hence *The Irish Eros*. It's a good idea, but there are two basic ways of tackling the subject and neither has recommended itself to David Marcus. It would make sense to confine selections to the period beginning in 1967, to show how things have altered in the field of fornication. On the other hand, you might cover the whole spectrum of Irish writing to indicate the subversive strain of sexuality which persisted in the face of the most rigorous repression. This anthology goes back to the 17th century, with one or two translations from the Irish, and it includes Thomas Moore and Richard Brinsley Sheridan; but these are just nods to comprehensiveness.

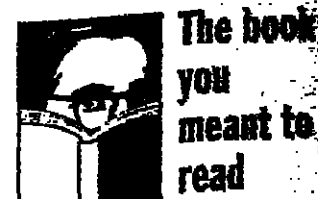
The emphasis falls strongly on the 20th-century and in particular, on recent writing. David

Marcus has also – unwisely, I think – opted for completeness in all his choices; he insists on the whole poem or story, and this brings about a rather patchy look. The inclusion of excerpts would have made for a much more complex and richer book. As it is, you are struck even more forcibly than with most anthologies by the omissions.

There is nothing from Brian Kerrigan's rip-roaring "The Midnight Court" of 1790 (of which, to cap it all, David Marcus is one of the translators), with its age-old woman's complaint: "How can I lie in a lukewarm bed/With all the thoughts that come into my head?" In the present century there's no MacNeice or Austin Clarke, no George Moore or William Trevor, no Mahon, Longley, Muldoon (although he gets in as a translator of Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill), no McGuckian or O'Searcaigh; and these are just the first names that spring to mind. John Montague is in, but not "The Siege of Mullingar", which surely puts its finger on what the anthology is about.

What you notice about the inclusions, even the most up-to-date, is the continuing intrusion of Catholicism into Irish life, whether it's treated as a force to be repudiated or merely taken for granted. Priests and nuns, though, are now allowed to assert their right to sexual fulfilment, along with everyone else, as in the stories by John McGahern and Honor Tracy. (The latter, too, alerts us to the fact that in Dublin you can't get up to anything without half your acquaintances spotting you at it). Ronan Sheehan's comic piece, "A Church and a Modern World", about a gauche young altar boy at a parish school desperately embracing chastity, shows how little has changed, in some respects, in the last 60-odd years. There's even an instance (in Kevin Casey's story) of an erring girl being denounced from the pulpit.

Many of the individual contributions here are cogent or illuminating or even mildly racy. But they don't add up to a denial of Vivian Mercer's observation. On the evidence presented, you have to conclude that the modern Irish still haven't got the hang of purely erotic writing.



The book you meant to read

**Beowulf**  
(SSS? AD)  
by Anonymous

Plot: Beowulf is an Anglo-Saxon folk epic set in Scandinavia. Hrothgar, leader of the Scyldings, decides to build a mead-hall. Here warriors hang out, tell tales and get drunk. A relative of Cain, Grendel, decides to spoil the fun, crashes the party and eats the guests. Beowulf comes to the rescue. He lies in wait for the mad troll and, after a bruising punch-up, Grendel slinks home, partially dismembered. Grendel's mother turns up, none too pleased. Snatching a warrior, she bolts for her swamp where Grendel is alive, but ailing. Beowulf takes off for the mere. He dives in and kills both Grendels after a struggle. Everyone returns to the mead-hall for more boozing and boasting. Fifty years pass. Beowulf has ruled the Geats wisely but his people are harassed by a dragon. Helped by young Wiglaf, Beowulf slays the monster and is fatally wounded. The poem ends with Beowulf's funeral.

Theme: "For any nobleman death is better than a life of shame." A grim code of heroism structures the action: the warrior must keep faith with his lord and fight to the limits of courage. Darkness and nasties are all around. Only Christian belief provides illumination.

Style: Old English verse is neither stanzic nor rhymed but instead uses an alliterative four-stressed line. The language has barbaric splendour entwined with riddling difficulty. The digression and brisk transitions hint at a range of ethical and historical reference that is lost forever.

Chief strengths: No other epic so combines the primitive with the allusively sophisticated. Beowulf's alien mixture of Christianity, paganism and martial valour constantly startles: the descriptions of violence achieve a repellent beauty.

Chief weaknesses: The compulsive showing off can grate. Nobody accepts a goblet of mead without launching into a catalogue of past triumphs.

What they thought of it then: The poem is buried among other monster tales in the Cotton manuscript; possibly enjoyed as a yarn, it wasn't highly regarded.

What we think of it now: Without Beowulf, Old English specialists would be out of work. The poem has been interpreted as folk legend, Christian allegory, political elegy and a satire on the heroic code. Most critics tend to rubbish the last third.

Responsible for: The genre of fantasy fiction. Tolkien wrote the *Lord of the Rings* under Beowulf's shadow.

Gavin Griffiths



The books you listen to

Strongly recommended for a Christmas present, *Penguin English Verse* (Penguin, 18hrs, £50) is a cavalcade of verse from Thomas Wyatt to Wilfred Owen, read by nine fine actors and edited by Paul Driver as "an anthology for the car", by rhythmic balance and tonal contrast rather than strict chronology. Inexplicably packaged as a gift set with six pairs of cassettes, each flanked by the complete text of the poems. Also pricey, but worth it, is *Talkies-award winner Wives and Daughters* (Cover to Cover, 25hrs30, £44.99). Prunella Scales skips effortlessly between innocence and experience as she reads Mrs Gaskell's unforgettable story of a doomed marriage and its aftermath.

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Next time you read that a possession 365 winter allow a whiff of sceptic wall in with the brewer York. I have been assured, but precisely 365 over the island of Cornwall.

The implication is simple: numerous is the resource, you can a different one every day for a year in waps-waps, still have 24 hours left. My reservations are twofold. I never read of a destination best of 364 or 367 of a particular asset, and get a certain amount of no-gives on. Second, the fact that it occurs with the frequency of the night of days in the year is not automatic. Good Thing. Indeed, I have it was to set foot again in some pubs in Cornwall since sources disagree about whether the total is reached with the of the island's smaller sibling, Brixia.

I could have set out to count every gle are of shimmering silver. But this the weather in the Caribbean is a glorious (highs in the mid-80s, to 10 degrees less), that instead I find the notion that there are plenty of – and went off to enumerate. At other blessings.

Every country, however modest a capital, St John's is a cheerfully dated sort of place, sprinkled enough to look passable for the ship visitors – a quarter-million in A more alluring statistic, though tucked just inside the door of the museum. Pride of place is given to that Viv Richards used for his breaking century off 56 deliveries in match in 1986. Alongside it – and I'm sorry for itself – is the cricket ball took the punishment, so bruised resemble an over-ripe passion fruit.

Besides emphasising the long cricketing superiority of the West, the museum makes the British smile, and frown. The good of thanks to the refreshingly straightward nature of the stout old court, that has been converted into a place learning about the island. The Antiguan from the turn of its origins to that tempestuous Viv Richards is traced out in a series

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# travel & outdoors

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Wyoming to New Zealand, on skis.....17

## Reasons to be cheerful in Antigua – part 365

Simon Calder counts the blessings beyond the island's shimmering beaches

Next time you read that a place possesses 365 "somethings", allow a whiff of scepticism to waft in with the breezy prose. York, I have been assured, has 365 pubs; and precisely 365 rivers irrigate the island of Dominica.

The implication is simple: that so numerous is the resource, you could visit a different one every day for a year (and, in leap years, still have 24 hours left over). My reservations are twofold. First, I never read of a destination bestowed with 364 or 367 of a particular asset, and suggest that a certain amount of rounding goes on. Second, the fact that an item occurs with the frequency of the number of days in the year is not automatically a Good Thing. Indeed, I have no wish ever to set foot again in some pubs in York. So learning that Antigua has 365 beaches provoked a degree of cynicism, particularly since sources disagree about whether or not the total is reached with the help of the island's smaller sibling, Barbuda.

I could have set out to count every single arc of shimmering silver. But this week the weather in the Caribbean has been so glorious (highs in the mid-80s, lows just 10 degrees less), that instead I accepted the notion that there are plenty of them – and went off to enumerate Antigua's other blessings.

Every country, however modest, needs a capital. St John's is a cheerfully dilapidated sort of place, spruced up just enough to look passable for the cruise ship visitors – a quarter-million last year. A more alluring statistic, though, is tucked just inside the door of the island's museum. Pride of place is given to the bat that Viv Richards used for his record-breaking century off 56 deliveries in a test match in 1986. Alongside it – and looking sorry for itself – is the cricket ball that took the punishment, so bruised as to resemble an over-ripe passion fruit.

Besides emphasising the long-term cricketing superiority of the West Indies, the museum makes the British visitor smile, and frown. The good cheer is thanks to the refreshingly straightforward nature of the stout old court house that has been converted into a place of learning about the island. The story of Antigua from the turmoil of its volcanic origins to that tempestuous Viv Richards innings is traced out in a series of

approachable exhibits. You could scoot around in 10 breezy minutes – or stay all morning to soak up the whole sad story.

That is where the frown comes in. The dreadful crimes perpetrated by the Europeans against the original inhabitants, and later against the slaves imported from Africa, hit particularly hard in Antigua. The roots of Eastern Caribbean independence arose as a reaction to especially harsh treatment on the island's plantations. The planters, and the sugar, have long dissolved against a background of unfavourable trade. Today, the bitterness of upmarket tourism is the source of the island's energy. Colonialism can take many forms.

You emerge from the museum, blinking into the high Caribbean noon, a little wiser and a lot more humble. Anyone without a skin as thick as sugar cane will immediately feel anxious about the reaction of local people to outsiders. Which makes the reality – that Antiguaners are open, generous and welcoming hosts – all the more gratifying. The ties with Britain are sturdy, too. I hitched a ride with Charles, who was born on the island but had spent 33 years of his working life in Tottenham – as long as he could last without tasting the soothing, salty air that dances through the streets of St John's.

He told me the hurricane season this year passed without serious damage in Antigua, a relief after the assault by Hurricane Luis in 1995. From some of the reports at the time, you might have concluded that the island had been blown so far off course that it was currently lost in the Bermuda Triangle. But the damage was rapidly repaired in time for the main tourist season. Bermuda shorts are back in town.

So are the "retail opportunities" that multiply around any Caribbean port. Avoid Little Switzerland (a watch shop, not a series of Alp-like humps) and the King's Casino, in favour of ambling past the out-sized Anglican cathedral that disproportionately dominates St John's. Keep going until you see the following message:

"Go to school. Study hard. Try to become a hero."

These stern words adorn a boarding above the gentle frenzy of commerce that comprises the town market. Trade takes the form of heroic, staccato yells. They slice cleanly through the rumble of diesel

(the site doubles as a bus station) and the thud of bass guitar riffs that boom out of passing cars – 1.8-litre ghetto-blasters.

Centre stage in this throng are the fruits coaxed patiently from the land. Antigua is smaller than the Isle of Wight, yet from some viewpoints the countryside goes on for ever. Forget that you are never more than seven miles from one of those 365 beaches, and plough across the heart of the island to touch the real texture of Antigua.

First, choose your weapon. This is how an Antiguan second-hand car dealer must feel as he takes buyers around the showroom. The people of Antigua are unfailingly polite – until they get behind the wheel of a vehicle. I had originally read the 40mph signs as signifying a maximum speed, but many drivers appear to regard this as either a bare minimum or an outright challenge.

The excitement goes up a notch as soon as there is some obstruction, when the drive-on-the-left rule is suspended. Skoda pick-ups (I promise you there is such a vehicle) clash with smoked-glass Japanese minibuses that barrel around the island, and any bystander unwise enough to be walking along the road must be prepared to jump into a ditch at a moment's notice.

You will probably think me foolish to confess that last Tuesday I rented a bicycle to take my two-wheeled place in this mobile circus. Indeed, in 40 miles of cycling I was forced off the road three times. But, if you remember, last Tuesday in Britain the blizzards were beginning to bite.

In Antigua, my only complaint about the weather was that the sun was perhaps impossibly shiny and the sky a shade too improbably blue.

A bike bestows the freedom to take Antigua at its own pace. You get heckled plenty, in the cheeriest of manners, from villagers who think the sight of a honky on a bike is a hoot – or at least a change from the Jeep-servicing tourists.

I unwound through the island, past prairie landscapes speckled with cattle and framed by scraggy escarpments and that sharp ultramarine sky. A long-overturned car quietly rusted into this wilderness, as plants flexed their tentacles around the rotting steel hulk. The whole scene demanded a health warning at the foot of the foreground – because it looked as if the Marlboro Man was expected to trot along at any moment.

He didn't show. But if he had, the two women toasting corn cobs against the pastel-yellow backdrop of their none-up, two-down timber home would have been ready with elveness. Antigua is one long snack-opportunity: corn here, coconut there, an occasional curried goat served in unassuming proximity to the live, unspiced version. My favourite roadside stop was the Your Home Town Luncheonette. If only it were.

After a while you begin to discern the concise construction of every Antiguan village. The sturdiest structure in each hamlet is the church, a stark import among the cluster of diminutive homes. These bungalows are mostly wood, with a lattice of shutters that makes each one as well ventilated as a Eurotunnel freight wagon. Children bicker gently (pausing to smirk and wave at the cyclist), while notices warn of the community rules: "Loiterers," threatened one sign, "will be persecuted." Fearing the Antiguan

equivalent of a Farwah, I pedalled on.

From tip to toe of this concise island takes 90 minutes. You know you are nearing the end when the scattering of trees on the horizon is augmented by the geometric precision of yacht masts.

English Harbour is still an accurate name for the ample bay that subdues Caribbean storms, and provides shelter for around 100 yachts. Within the sanctum of Nelson's Dockyard, you hear plenty of British voices among the boat-owners, supplemented by American and Australian accents. But you notice more the bold Georgian architecture that turns the ensemble into a most characterful marina.

Two centuries ago, Antigua had a parallel role to its position today: hub for the Caribbean. Nowadays aircraft home in on the island; but as the 18th century gave way to the 19th, this was the base for the British navy in the region.

Horatio Nelson was a frequent visitor, though on one occasion he became so ill before departure for Britain, he ordered a cask of rum to be placed on board to preserve his body should he die. An exhibition of naval paraphernalia includes old dockyard furniture scarred by ancient graffiti, and Nelson's telescope.

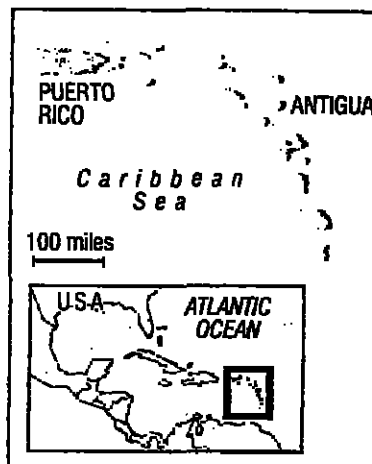
You can turn a blind eye to tourism by scrambling along to the end of the peninsula, across rocks strewn with pregnant-looking Turk's head cacti. The lazy arm of the sea wall flicks out into the Caribbean, while the shoulder merges with a gaunt cliff. The skewed strata of rich red rocks takes a pounding from the sea, and melts into a series of jagged crescents. I thought: I hope they're not regarded as beaches.

And then I counted my blessings.



Half Nelson: The view over English Harbour from Shirley Heights (named after a former governor). In the 18th century Horatio Nelson was a frequent visitor to the British naval base here. And in the Nelson's Dockyard museum the Admiral's telescope can be seen proudly on display.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT HARDING



Features Options End

### Primrose Hill girl sees Great Wall of China

Microsoft® Encarta® 97 World Atlas.

Antigua survival guide

On call: this month, Antigua acquires a new dialling code. The old 001 809 country code is replaced by 001 268. This should be followed by the seven-digit number. Antigua is four hours behind the UK (noon in London is 8am in St John's).

Getting there: British Airways and BWIA operate non-stop flights from Gatwick and Heathrow respectively. Official fares cost around £920 return; cheaper tickets are widely available for around £500 return through discount agents such as the Caribbean Reunion Club (0171-344 0101). Some long-stay specials for as little as £249 for seats in charter flights. Prices rise sharply over Christmas.

Getting in: British citizens need only a valid passport to be admitted for short visits.

Getting out: departure tax of EC\$30 (£7) is payable at the airport.

Package holidays: numerous tour operators, including Thomson, Kuoni and British Airways Holidays, offer inclusive packages in Antigua, using either scheduled

flights, or charters on airlines such as Britannia and Caledonian Airways. From Thomson (0990 502399), a fortnight in February at the Club Antigua costs around £1,250, including flights from Gatwick or Manchester.

Getting around: bus services are frequent on most routes, if scary. Simon Calder rented a mountain bike from Cycle Crazy in St John's (463 9253) for £9 a day. The best, though dated, map is published by Ordnance Survey at £6.

Staying healthy: besides the risk of road accidents, the most significant threat is from the intense sun in the middle of the day.

Cashing up: the currency in Antigua is the Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$), shared with seven other nearby nations. The bank rate this week was: £1 = EC\$4.30 and US\$1 = EC\$2.75. The US dollar is readily acceptable everywhere – but at a disadvantageous rate compared with what you can get at a bank.

Seeing sights: the Museum of Antigua in St John's opens daily except Sunday; a donation of EC\$5 is requested. Nelson's Dockyard is open daily, admission EC\$6.50.

Must see: the big event is Sailing Week, 27 April-3 May.

Further information: Antigua High Commission, 15 Thayer Street, London W1M 5LD (0171-486 7073).

Features Options End

### Pygmy population discovered in grandmother's parlour

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See The Independent Magazine page 5.



# Giving thanks for American prosperity

Thursday brings Thanksgiving, the start of serious shopping – and the American way to take the heat off Christmas. By Matthew Hoffman

Thanksgiving is a true original, a holiday invented by the Americans and dedicated to celebrating the country's founding purpose: plenty. Yes, some immigrants travelled to those shores in search of religious or political freedom; but as every observer of American society for the past two centuries has noted, material success is the country's true god – damned by elites as "consumerism", enjoyed by everyone else as "prosperity". The citizens of the United States know they have much to be grateful for. And once a year they gather around their tables to acknowledge that gratitude – which they accomplish by overeating.

The First Thanksgiving – in 1621 – set the pattern. In one sense it was a traditional harvest festival, only the Pilgrims of Plymouth, Massachusetts were celebrating the success of their first harvest. They were Puritans from East Anglia and Lincolnshire, who had sailed from Plymouth in Devon in the *Mayflower* the year before. When I was a school child in Pennsylvania, it was explained to me that the Pilgrims had survived their first, harsh, New England winter through the assistance of the local Indians and, in gratitude, they invited them to participate in their first feast. Now I am pleased to learn, from a posting on the Internet, that Edward Winslow, a leader of the Plymouth colony, mentioned the Indians in his account of the 1621 jamboree:

"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week... Many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest King Massasoit, with some 90 men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others."

What has elevated the festivities from a religious harvest festival for the God-fearing to a national event is the growth of the US from an agrarian to an industrial – and now post-industrial – society. In the process the holiday has taken on the customary forms of a secular country – where Christmas is about shopping, and Easter is about a

parade. In fact, for many Americans, the most significant fact about Thanksgiving is that the date it is celebrated (the fourth Thursday in November) marks the beginning of Christmas shopping and this, in turn, is signalled by a Thanksgiving Day parade that is concluded with the delivery of Santa Claus to the largest department store in town.

Macy's annual Thanksgiving Day parade in New York is the most famous of these events, but it has its smaller counterparts throughout the country. Philadelphia claims to have the oldest Thanksgiving parade and even little nearby Pottstown, my home town, musters its school marching bands and drill teams and white-booted cheerleaders to glitter in the late autumn sunshine.

But the meal remains the main event: ritualised in its menu (turkey with cranberry sauce, candied sweet potatoes, and pumpkin pie are traditional, although the side dishes vary with ethnicity) and demanding in its attendance – the whole family, no matter how spread out across the country, is summoned to a common table. (Chinese restaurants in New York shut up shop this one day in the year, and their staff take the day off in the casinos of New Jersey.) There is a hidden blessing here that only an American like myself, who has lived through the English Christmas, with its suffocating triple role of family get-together, children's gift fest and religious holiday, might appreciate. For Americans, Thanksgiving takes the heat off Christmas. The extended family gathers (and has its annual tiffs and *longueurs*); no gifts are exchanged; and Christmas is left as a quiet time for parents and children to muddle through on their own.

The nicest fact about Thanksgiving is its limitations. The holiday resists commercialisation and other add-ons: no special cards, no new, elaborate ways of roasting a turkey, no making the holiday more special by taking an expensive trip. Andy Warhol once pointed out the democratic credentials of Coca-Cola. There's no way of getting a better one, he observed: a fancier version just isn't a Coke. The same is true of Thanksgiving. Get the family together and eat a big bird. That's it; that's all you can do. Otherwise it ain't Thanksgiving. Welcome to America's democratic holiday.

Additional research by Alissa Quart in New York



Start spreading the news: Thanksgiving marks the start of the Christmas shopping season

PHOTOGRAPH BY JON LEVY

## New York: the fast facts

**Getting there:** London-New York is the busiest international air route in the world. Between 8am and 7pm every day, at least 20 wide-bodied aircraft (plus a couple of Concorde) take off from London, destination Kennedy airport in New York City, or its New Jersey rival Newark. These flights are supplemented by regional departures from Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow, and connections are available from a range of provincial airports connecting through Dublin, Amsterdam and Reykjavik. Before mid-December, you can expect to pay £200-300 for a return flight over a weekend, inclusive of taxes of around £25. To get the best prices, book through a discount agency rather than direct with the airline. The lowest fares are on airlines with less frequent services, such as Kuwait Airways, Air India and El Al.

**Airport links:** the cheapest and surest way from Kennedy into Manhattan is to take the free Port Authority bus to Howard Beach subway station. From here, a \$1.50 (90p) ride will take you to any station on the New York subway system. Total journey time from Kennedy airport to mid-town Manhattan is about 90 minutes. From Newark airport in New Jersey, the most exotic alternative to the New Jersey Transit bus to Manhattan, price \$7 (£4.50), is to take a taxi to Hoboken for around \$25 (£16) and cross on the ferry across the Hudson River.

**Getting around:** the subway system is fast,

cheap and complicated. Before attempting to use the system, pick up a map and some flat-fare tokens (\$1.50/90p) from a kiosk in a subway station. These tokens are also valid for Manhattan bus services, which mostly run north-south along the main avenues.

**Accommodation:** (All the New York telephone numbers quoted below should be prefixed 001 212 when dialling from the UK.) New York is easily the most expensive place to stay in the US. A room in a good, central hotel such as the Mayflower on Central Park West (265 0060) will cost at least \$160 (£95) a night for a double

room, and bookings before Christmas are heavy. An alternative is a place in a hostel. These are often restricted to foreign visitors only, apparently in a bid to deter local low life. Single and double rooms are available at the centrally located Vanderbilt YMCA (234 East 47th Street, 756 9600) for £35/£45 respectively, while along at the Big Apple Hostel (119 W 45th Street, 302 2603) a double room costs \$58 (£35) – but you have to take a chance on the day; it does not accept advance bookings.

**Packages:** some specialists such as Major Travel (0171-485 7017) sell tours that include

transatlantic flights and hotel accommodation, for around £449. The big airlines also sell packages through their tour operating subsidiaries – American Airlines Holidays (0181-577 9966), British Airways Holidays (01293 723100), United Vacations (0181-313 0999) and Virgin Holidays (01293 617181).

**Red tape:** British passport holders travelling on normal return air tickets to the United States do not require visas. A visa is useful, however, if you plan to visit America frequently – it cuts down on form-filling and reduces processing time at US Immigration. A visitor's visa, valid for up to 10 years, costs £13.75 from the Visa Section of the US Embassy. Call the premium-rate number (0891 200290) for further details.

## something to declare

### trouble spots

#### Reports from Latin America

**French Guiana:** Gangs of armed rioters fought police, looted stores and set them on fire for four nights – *Reuters*.

**Colombia:** About 200 Colombians have fled to Panama to escape violence in northwest Colombia – long the scene of bitter conflicts between rebels and right-

wing paramilitary groups battling for control of contraband routes – *Reuters*.

**Honduras:** Widespread storms have caused the worst flooding in 42 years in parts of Central America, killing at least nine people and driving tens of thousands from their homes. Seven people have died in due to storms over the past nine days – *AP*.

### bargain of the week

For the next week, a car and four passengers can travel from Liverpool to Belfast for a total of £99 each way on

Norse Irish Ferries (01232 779090) with a berth in a cabin, a four-course dinner and a full Irish breakfast.

### visitors' book

Museum of Antigua, West Indies (the book asks for suggestions for improvements, as well as comments)

Restore your landmarks and forts – *Vince Marrone, New York City*.

Happy and friendly – *Theror Firman, London*.

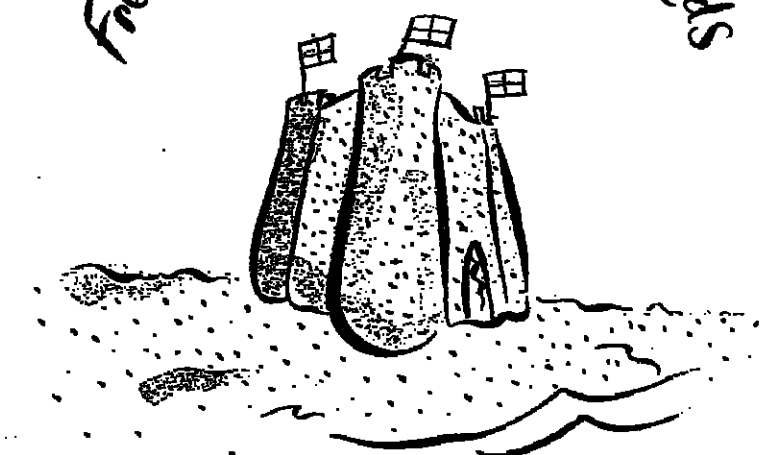
Thank you for preserving the past for all to see – *Germaine Cassell, Quebec*.

Particularly good for children – *Derek Bond, London*.

I went back to the past for a while – *Arif, Bangladesh*.

A cool cocktail would be nice – *Johanne Foster, Preston*.

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Hem  
Robert Rollas

Hem... still lingers in the mind's eye... we covered the top of a hill... forward on itself, and then... driver had to honk and slow down... doublers that were sleeping in the... Also 1800.

His words lingered alongside my vi... were the sleeping donkeys as we dr... motorways but, equally, not much m... ern Andalusia is at a half-way stage... The movement away from living i... of all classes in Andalusia has been... houses and farm buildings are now c... have been converted into villas for 3... diners.

Almería, the local capital, is a stati... centre. The Moorish fortress, the... remains as a massive reminder of th... scholars whose centuries of occupa... in these parts.

"Don't miss the bar," said a highl... ing from the top as we pulled up th... fortress, which now defends only mar... This promise was a stimulus to p... dreaded Spanish hour of 2pm had be... locked up for the day. It was well... though. The views across the city a... the highest section of the fortress i... that contrasts with the Moorish style... If anything, the cathedral at Almeri...

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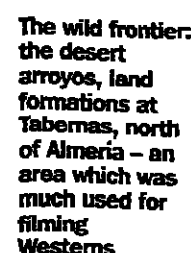
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PHOTOGRAPH BY  
ROBERT HARRISON

Robert Rollason tours the wild country around Almería in southern Spain







150 من المجلد

# A view of Lakeland

David Walker strides out from Arnside in Cumbria



From Arnside, walk along the water's edge, dodging anglers' rods and tack

PHOTOGRAPH: PETER LOMAS

The Albion sits on a commanding corner in the small Cumbrian town of Arnside and in fine weather the place to be is outside, gazing across the expanse of the Kent River to the Lakeland heights beyond – it's extraordinary how different the view becomes when there is a layer of estuarial mud in the foreground.

But enough of views – a salient fact is that the Albion is a Thwaites pub. Thwaites of Blackburn is one of the reasons beer drinkers in this corner of the North West are still well off for choice, although it's a lot less than it used to be. Once, the white-washed inn, shabbily comfortable inside, looked over the water to Ulverston, home of the great Lake District brewer Hartley's.

It's from the dinky promenade in front of the Albion, with plenty of parking space, that our walk starts. Arnside was once a railhead. Coal steamers unloaded on the pier for rail connections inland via Carnforth. Trains still stop but the pier, washed away and rebuilt several times, is now just a small jetty.

It's a quiet place. Excitement is provided by tourists who have ignored the hooter and all the signs, and have got themselves into danger from the fast-rising tides that daily transform the Kent estuary from a sandy haunt of gulls and guillemots into a wide and choppy inlet of the sea.

We are going in a circle – so you can do this walk in reverse order if you like. With the Albion at your back, dodge the anglers' rods and tack along the water's edge; first follow a path, then walk along the high water line. (If the water really is high you will need to clamber up the bank and walk parallel to the shore, through the oak and beech.)

Half a mile or so round the shore – it's fun for twitches, since the sea fowl are various – you reach New Barns. Either follow the coast, though the path can be muddy, or take a track on the left which seems to be leading into a caravan park. It does, but the saving grace is the way the caravans are screened by trees. The path soon leads into dense woods and, bearing right, a hundred yards or so on from the edge of the caravanserai, you open out at the shore again at White Creek and pick up the path along the coast.

For a mile or so the walk is a delight: wide seascapes on one side, views across to Walney Island to the north west and as far

as Heysham to the south. Consult the tide tables. When the water is up, it laps at the foot of the low cliffs. When it is low, it reveals acres of sand and furrowed marsh seeming to stretch across Morecambe Bay to the northern shore. (Yes, there is a path, but the local papers lovingly record the deaths of those who failed to follow it in the company of the accredited guides.)

Over the cliff edge, the pine boughs twist and curl. Once they were handholds for marauding Scots who were raiding this coast for cattle as late as the mid 17th century.

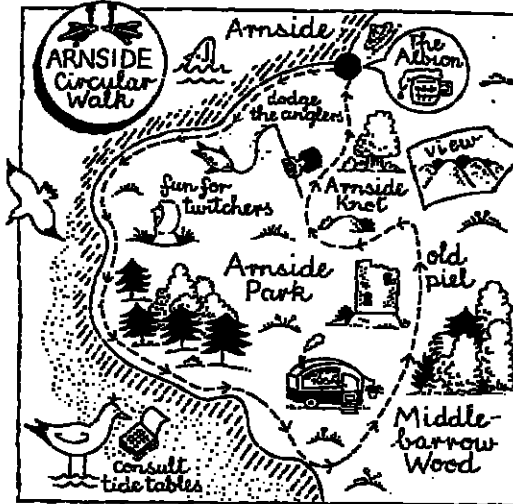
Blow, another caravan park (at Far Arnside) – a vista of flounced curtain and chintz suites prompting the unoriginal reflection that to some people a holiday consists of attempting to recreate the minutiae of the circumstances of home.

Continue through the Far Arnside hamlet, cross the road and cut diagonally across the next two fields to join a path running under Middlebarrow to the old pie (or peel, the local spelling is various) tower – an anti-Scots device erected in the 14th century. From the farm at the foot of the tower, the track leads up to the road running between Silverdale and Arnside that you crossed half a mile back.

A hundred or so yards along in the Arnside direction, overlooked on the left by a steep cliff, a footpath sign directs you up and over a stile into the pretty woodland that surrounds the Knott. It's National Trust land, well cared for.

It is a fair climb up to the top of the Knott, just over 500ft inside 400 yards, but it is worth the effort, for it offers a magnificent view across southern Lakeland. Once a fat wedge of Lancashire stretched all the way up over the River Kent into southern Lakeland and across to Barrow-in-Furness. Nowadays, part of Cumbria, it lies before you – the villas of Ulverston, the meadows at the foot of Backbarrow, the Kent narrowing on the way to Kendal. To your right the heights of Yorkshire, and ahead a glimpse of the crags around Scafell.

A path leads to the left, down into Arnside, hitting the road just above a big residential home. Either follow the road back down to the Albion, or a steepish path back to the water's edge. Hungry? The baker's next to the pub on its commanding corner site has a small café attached – their home-baked pies are much recommended.



- From the Albion car park walk along the water's edge (if tide is too high clamber up the bank) to New Barns.
- Proceed to White Creek either round coastal path or inland through caravan park.
- Take coastal path to Far Arnside – and consult tide timetables first.
- Once through the hamlet, cross road and take path diagonally through two fields to the old pie tower.
- Join road to Arnside and after a hundred yards veer off on footpath to the Knott. A path leads down left on to road to Arnside. Follow this road back to the Albion.



## Duff Hart-Davis

The discovery that compost may have therapeutic powers has astonished scientists

Anyone with a garden knows how to make compost. But who can turn "green" waste material into a product with an extraordinary natural power to suppress plant diseases such as club-root in brassicas, brown rot in potatoes and red core in strawberries?

The answer is Eco-Sci, a small company based in Exeter. Although barely three years old, the firm has established itself as a pioneer of composting techniques in the United Kingdom, and has stumbled on a fact which may prove of global significance.

The discovery that compost has therapeutic powers astonished the firm's scientists. It emerged from field trials in which crops treated with compost not only grew faster but also seemed more resistant to disease. Maize, for instance, produced leaves double the normal size, bigger cobs, and stems less prone to topple over.

Nobody yet understands quite why the compost is so effective. Laboratory research is in progress both at Eco-Sci and at Exeter University, with back-up work going on at the government's Central Science Laboratory; but tests have yet to establish whether the compost contains chemicals or organisms which are actually killing harmful bacteria, or whether, by promoting rapid root growth and thicker cell walls, it is merely furnishing plants with better resistance to disease.

Eco-Sci's raw material – 20,000 tons a year – comes from gardens and municipal parks in Devon, and the handling of it is an impressive operation. A large mobile shredder tours four collection sites and reduces great heaps of branches, shoots, leaves and grass to a coarse pulp. As each load goes into the spinning flails of its jaws, the machine gives an angry rumble, loud as thunder, and spews out pieces of wood to a distance of 60 or 70 yards.

The pulp is then laid out in tapered windrows or banks, four metres wide at the base and 50 metres long. There it remains for about three months, cooking gently, having its temperature taken once a week and being turned by a special machine every fortnight or so, depending on how wet or dry the weather has been. Finally it is put through a

screen, which separates out undigested lumps, and the good stuff goes on to a big pile, under cover, to mature. By then it looks and smells like fine, dry earth.

The company has begun marketing West Country Compost at a retail price of about £2.45 for a 50-litre bag. Yet Eco-Sci's main income is derived from receiving raw material in the first place.

Problems of waste-disposal are already acute, and Devon local authorities pay a substantial gate-fee for every ton of waste dumped at Eco-Sci's sites. In the view of Tom Young, the company's managing director, "there is soon going to be a desperate shortage of holes in the ground", and he believes that the cost of dumping rubbish, now £20 a ton in many areas, will double over the next few years.

Professional compost-making is thus pressed by an urgent need for innovation, and Eco-Sci is experimenting with new methods of processing ordinary household waste in giant plastic bags known as Eco-pods. Domestic rubbish arrives at its depot in Plymouth by the truck-load. In theory, the garbage has already been sorted by householders into organic and non-organic categories, but the heap I saw being handled, under a swarm of gulls, contained many choice allegedly-putrescible items such as loudspeakers, vacuum cleaners and pairs of trainers.

With these removed by hand, the bulk goes into a shredder-scruncher, and thence is carried by conveyor belt to a rotary trommel screen, which separates out any surviving pieces 25mm or more across. The fine material, known as feedstock, is loaded by a self-propelled stuffer into a pod – a tube of heavy-duty green plastic 10ft in diameter.

As the stuffer creeps forward, the pod gradually extends and fills like a giant sausage. At its maximum length of 60 metres, one unit can hold 200 tons, and it has numerous advantages over open-air systems. Not only does it contain smells, dust and potential leakage; because temperature is accurately controlled by air blown through the pod, the process of decomposition is accelerated, finishing within eight to 12 weeks. The compost which emerges cannot be sold to gardeners, because it may contain chips of glass; but it is perfectly adequate for landscaping over filled-in sites.

So the race is on to recycle everything that can be saved, to dump as little as possible in the ground. Yet it is compost's natural ability to fight plant disease which most excites Eco-Sci's staff.

Already they have conducted field trials in Hungary and India, and on Thursday two senior executives returned from an exploratory visit to Egypt. There, it is hoped, their breakthrough may prove a decisive factor in the battle against brown rot, which has become endemic in the country's vital potato crop.

## Corporate hospitality – a dog's life

Michael Prestage goes sheepdog trialling to relieve executive stress

In the grounds of a number of country house hotels, business executives are getting the chance to try out the latest line in corporate hospitality: that most rural pursuit, sheepdog trialling. Recently, for instance, executives from the communications giant Ericsson were able to swap business suits and power dressing for jeans and sweatshirts and the chance to try the reality of the BBC's *One Man And His Dog*.

The BBC programme, now in its 20th year, has made sheepdog trialling universally recognised. Ironically, though, the increasing popularity of such events comes at a time when fewer people are training dogs and their use on farms is diminishing as farmers opt for such aids as motorised quad bikes.

A shortage of trained sheepdogs has seen their value soar. At a recent auction at Sennybridge, near Brecon, Powys, 90 dogs were auctioned, including one that reached a record price in Britain of £2,600.

Merion Owen began sheepdog trialling as a 10-year-old, following a tradition started by his grandfather. His father is still one of the leading dog trainers in Wales. "I see no problem with doing corporate events," Merion remarks. "It helps make trialling more popular, and

gives an insight into what goes on."

And so, stood in a field in the grounds of Puckrup Hall Hotel, near Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, Ericsson's finest took it in turns to shout the commands that guided the border collies trained by former Welsh champion Merion Owen, himself a past competitor on the BBC programme.

Working on the farm, Merion would mainly use whistled commands to his dogs as they set about tending his flock of sheep. For the corporate clients, four verbal commands suffice: "bye" to send the dog clockwise, "away" for anti-clockwise, "stand" to stop, and "walk".

Eccentrically, a course has also been arranged through which three ducks are guided. It includes a cross-roads, a water chute and negotiating a set of gates before the ducks are herded into a box. This is not as difficult as it may sound: the ducks are practically tame and were raised on Merion's farm at Camarthen, West Wales. However, that most clients succeed in their task owes more to the skill of the dogs and the advice of Merion. Yet it still brings a sense of achievement.

Merion said: "It would be quite difficult to let clients try on their own, but some are good. Women tend to



Canine stress-reliever

be better because they listen before-hand and take advice. Some of the men think they know it all already."

He admitted that the three dogs he regularly uses know the course and will sometimes do the right thing even if given the wrong command. At busy times they can be going through their paces at two or three events a week.

As one happy participant said, while clutching his shepherd's crook: "This is really good. It is not something I would have the chance to do anywhere else and it is amazing to see how well the dog responds to the commands, even if you have no real idea what you're doing."

Merion puts on similar displays at game shows; it was at a show in Oxford two years ago that he was spotted by Adrian Brown, an organiser of corporate events, who saw an opening for the attraction.

"The days when you could get away with just offering good food and drink are over," Mr Brown explained. "People want to try something different and we have to keep coming up with new ideas. The sheepdog trials are fun, but also give people an insight into the skills involved."

He said the added idea of using ducks was not only practical, but made the whole event something of a novelty. People could have a laugh. And to date nobody has declined to try – an important consideration when one recent client was paying £55,000 a day for the package that included hotel and dinner.

For more details about sheepdog events call 01267 290282

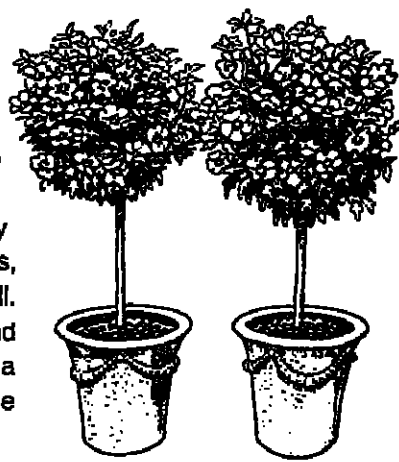
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# The company of squirrels

Martin Thompson visits Thetford Forest Park

The last American nuclear bomber has roared away on its final sortie from RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk, to the relief of the nightjars and woodlarks which inhabit nearby Thetford Forest Park. Britain's largest lowland forest, it covers 50,000 acres and straddles the border between Suffolk and Norfolk. There are no "Keep out" signs and barbed-wire fences here - it's a people-friendly place complete with visitor centre, shop, café and picnic lawn (an ambitious feature, no doubt, in this weather, but much used in summer).

The use of space in the park is impressive. This may be a forest, but the plantations of conifers and broad-leaved trees are interspersed with areas of open areas for outdoor activities. It's a particularly good place for families. For those with smaller children, there's a "Squirrel Maze" and an Adventure Play Course. And there are miles of circular, waymarked trails that can be explored by bike, on horseback or on foot.

A million people a year visit Thetford Forest, yet once you leave the main car park and head off into the unknown, the chances of becoming snarled up in a crowd of fellow hikers are minimal. If you crave only the company of squirrels, there are lesser known trails to follow, fanning out from a dozen smaller car park sites dotted throughout the forest. A map of these sites is available from the High Lodge Visitor Centre. Orienteering maps are also on sale. Adults are offered a choice of three levels, according to experience, and a mini-orienteeering circuit, known as the Squirrel's Scamper, is Thetford's way of introducing children to the sport.

If you have resisted family pressure to fit a bike rack to the car, a range of mountain bikes, off-road tandems and trailer bikes are available for hire at High Lodge every day in the summer, and on weekends and in half-term weeks during the winter months. The cost of renting a child's mountain bike is £5 per half day.

Thetford is managed on behalf of the state by Forest Enterprise, which has the delicate task of balancing the needs of recreational users with those of com-



Hidden in the trees: 'there are family-orientated activities to entice you to hit the TV off-button'

PHOTOGRAPH: BRIAN HARRIS

mercial forestry and nature conservation. The forest may be a £3m a year timber-producing business but part of management time is spent in brain-storming ideas for imaginative events to increase the forest's appeal to visitors of all ages.

Events take place throughout the year and include: deer safaris, fungal forays, guided bike rides, murder mystery trails and nocturnal quests to see Thetford's rare nightjars.

Thetford's newly-introduced population of red squirrels may be in hibernation, but throughout the winter months there are family-orientated activities here to entice you to hit the

TV off-button and line up the wellies beside the front door. These include Twilight Zone guided walks, a chance to see the forest at night, and Suzy Squirrel's Winter Nuts for the under-10s, who are invited to become sleuths tracking down the squirrel's hidden store.

Our family has become very enthusiastic about Thetford Forest Park. On Sundays we tend to roam through the forest on our bikes. And a few weeks ago, at Halloween we joined an 80-strong group for an evening of ghostly forest tales, with stage-managed sightings of spectral nuns flitting through the foliage.

There is no need to wait for an organised activity to get the best out of Thetford; you can always do as we did and import your own event. In August, we held our eldest daughter's 10th birthday party in the forest. Tea was consumed on the picnic lawn after an energetic six-mile bike ride. It should have been easy enough to follow the trail, but somehow we still managed to get ourselves lost, if only temporarily. After the ritual cutting of the cake, the girls disappeared for an hour of rope swinging in the adventure playground. The verdict from the birthday girl? "Brilliant fun... total exhaustion. The best party I have ever had."

Thetford Forest Park is close to the A11 and is less than 45 minutes by car from Cambridge, Norwich and Peterborough. The High Lodge Forest Visitor Centre is open during the winter at weekends and in half-term weeks, and every day throughout the summer. Winter events at the park include story-telling (with tales of the forest) at 1.30pm on Sunday, 1 December, a mince pie walk from 10.30am on Sunday 8 December, and a barbecue with carol singing from 1pm on Sunday, 15 December. For more details call 01843 810271. Events cost from £2 for an adult and £1 per child.

For bike hire details, call Flinstone Adventures on 0589 100831.

## Are we nearly there?

A weekly round-up of outings for children

This is National Tree Week, and communities all over the country are planting forests and showing children how trees contribute to our health and environment.

### Hedge for health

Wear old clothes and gloves to plant a hedge. Meet at The Garden House, St Nicholas Park, Jubilee Rd, Newcastle-upon-Tyne Sun 24 November, 10.30am-12.15pm (0191-284 6884)

### See how it burns

Enjoy a charcoal burning demonstration, collect acorns to grow oaks and finish with a barbecue (bring your own food and drink). Devichovs Wood Trusts Reserve, Perranarworthal (btw Truro and Falmouth) Today 2pm-5pm (01872-73034)

### Know the worst about owls

Examine owl pellets to discover the birds' prey, before heading off to the woodland and play area. Ruthven Valley Holidays, Ruthven Bridge, nr Bodmin Sun 24 Nov (01872-73939)

### Plant young fruit trees

And decorate ancient oaks. There's also music, crafts, story-telling and a tree trail. All outdoors, so wrap up warm. Meet at Dawson's Hill, Dunstan's Rd, off Upland's Rd, E Dulwich London SE22. Today (0171-278 6612) 12pm-4.30pm

### Learn from the professionals

Pershore College of Horticulture offer Guided tours of their arboretum, and demonstrations of tree-planting. Buy your own young tree to take home. Avon Bank, Pershore, Hereford, Worcestershire. Today, 10am-4pm (01886 552433)

### Plant a time capsule

... among the new saplings. Near Seaford, W Lothian, Scotland, Sun 24 November, 11am (01501 823015)

### Folklore and carving

Get to grips with wood in an activities day which combines tree dressing, puppets, wood carving and hurdle making. Bring refreshments. Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel, Rumore Common, Surrey, Sun 24 November, 10am-4pm (01372-452528) Adults £10, u-18s £8

### Be taken for a ride at Burton-upon-Trent

After working to preserve the forest canopy, kids get a ride from Shire Horses, Newton Rd Park, Winskill, Burton-upon-Trent. Today, 10am-3pm (01283 508598)

Liese Spencer

## You go away for a week and...

To travel is, hopefully, a better thing than to arrive back in the office. For a good definition of the word "travel", try this: spend a week drifting around the Caribbean, then on Thursday wander back into work and enquire, casually, "Has anything been happening?"

The salvo of ripe language by way of response affirmed that, indeed, quite a lot had been going on: snowstorms, the closure of the London Underground for three hours because of power cuts, and the fire in the Channel Tunnel.

Two components of this trinity of calamities have diminished, but the third will have long-term repercussions for Britain's travellers. Among them, our illustrious Sally Kindberg (whose work appears on page 13). After her journey from Brussels this week, she vowed "I don't ever want to go on Eurostar again."

At lunchtime on Tuesday,

Ms Kindberg was in Brussels, trying to catch a train to Waterloo. The fire had taken place the previous evening, so she assumed the train operator, Eurostar, would have contingency plans up and running. The problem was, the company didn't seem to have any.

"Nobody knew what was going on. One Eurostar official offered me the numbers of three airlines, but wouldn't let me use his phone." The queue for the public phones was so long that she gave up and waited to find out what Eurostar would do with the hundreds of stranded passengers.

Eventually a plan was hatched. Travellers would go by Eurostar across the French border to Lille, change trains and head for Calais. A bus to Kindberg (whose work appears on page 13). After her journey from Brussels this week, she vowed "I don't ever want to go on Eurostar again."

At lunchtime on Tuesday,



Simon Calder

arriving in London by 9.30pm.

If the theory of this six-stage journey sounds unappealing, the practice was much, much worse. Early on, the passengers waited an hour at Lille station for the Calais train. To compensate, perhaps, the waiting buses at Calais were super-heated. This would have been fine - except that the passengers were stuck on the buses for nearly three hours.

It turned out that they were waiting for a SeaFrance ferry. This was a curious choice of shipping line on the part of Eurostar, since there are two much larger companies - P&O and Stena Line - that each operates at least one

ferry to Dover every hour.

The wait on the coach was better than the voyage. "It seemed to me there were too many people," says Ms Kindberg. "There were not enough seats, so loads of us ended up sitting on the floor." They had been issued with refreshment vouchers, but these were valid only from one café - which soon sported a queue of serpentine proportions.

The search for food became academic. Ms Kindberg lost her appetite when some fellow passengers began a demonstration of synchronised seasickness. "Many of them had chosen the train to avoid the Channel crossing. Some people were getting hysterical."

During the two-hour sailing, passengers were assured that they would receive a refund on their Eurostar tickets - a promise, says Ms Kindberg, on which the company reneged. But the immediate concern was to reach London.

"We had to change buses between leaving the boat at Dover and reaching Ashford station. Then the train took ages to reach Waterloo, where we finally arrived just before 2am. I was lucky because I live in London. Lots of other pas-

sengers who were heading further had serious problems. Eurostar was offering to find hotels for people, but refused to pay for them. One young French girl who was supposed to be travelling on to York said she was going to spend the night waiting at King's Cross."

Ms Kindberg managed to persuade her against hanging around London's hub of prostitution and low-life, then set about finding a cab home. By now, fights were breaking out among frustrated passengers arguing over taxis. "One driver told me that there had been plenty of cabs earlier in the night, but they'd all been taken by Eurostar staff to get home."

There was no sign of the promised refund, either. Ms Kindberg finally procured a complaints form, whose small print revealed that she could expect only a free trip on Eurostar. "There's no way I want another ticket," she says.

The strength of feeling in her voice mirrored the reaction when I asked if there had been any travel news of note this week. I would have offered Ms Kindberg some duty-free rum had I not already been obliged to use it to pacify colleagues.

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As we sprawled across the tracks, we were overtaken by the experts. Shimmering in Lycra suits, they glided past with effortless, rhythmic skating steps, pushing out first on one leg, then the other. Each step is an act of faith, as the entire weight of the body is carried forward



PHOTOGRAPH: TINA STALLARD

We were staying in the tiny village of Les Etables, not far from Le Puy. Apart from a couple of hotels set up for cross-country skiing and summer walking, most of the small stone houses belong to farmers. Our hotel, La Découverte, was refreshingly informal: we helped ourselves to drinks at the bar and signed for them, and meals were eaten at a long table – guests and hotel staff together. The communal meals forced us to resurrect

*Après-ski* was limited to three rather gloomy bars in the village, but we were happy to end the day with a swim or a sauna, then a doze with a novel. There were other possibilities, such as a ride in a sledge pulled by husky dogs bred at a nearby farm, or exploring the area on snowblines. These trips were fun, but the best moments were on the slopes after the first bruises had disappeared and I tried out a few tentative skating steps. Next year perhaps I shall consider a Lycra suit.

*A week at La Découverte in the peak month, February, costs about £400, which includes all meals, cross-country skis and boots, and tuition. Phone the sister hotel, also called La Découverte, at St Bonnet: 00 33 471 59 94 42. Alternatively, Waymark Holidays (01753 516477) specialises in cross-country skiing. A week at Les Etiales, including flights, full board, ski equipment and tuition, costs from £535.*

The two main specialists in the cross-country market are Inntravel and Headwater, each offering Nordic holidays in Norway, France, Switzerland and Italy. The logical choice is Norway, a huge, underpopulated snow zone where cross-country skiing is a national passion. When the gates close in Oslo, citizens pour on to floodlit tracks for an evening burn-up. At weekends, they enter all-comers races that attract as many as 10,000 starters.

In France, the smart get-away-from-it-all options are the Jura, the Massif Central and the Pyrenees, but escape is also possible in the Alps. The pick of the Headwater pack are *Failleroles* in the wilds of the western Auvergne, to the south of Clermont Ferrand, and *Six-For-à-Cheval*, a traditional village in Haute-Savoie near Geneva. *Inntravel* offers *La Cure* in the Jura above Lake Geneva, *Ceilac* in the Quercy National Park in Haute Savoie, and *La Llagonne* and *Valcabolière* on the forested Cerdagne plateau in the Pyrenees.

**Headwater Holidays** (01606 48669; fax 43761): Venabu Fjellhotel, Røingbu, from £26; Auberge des Montagnes, Pallicher, from £297, self drive, or £419, rail or air/rail, (prices include travel as specified, transfers as required, 7 nights' full board, equipment & tuition/guiding). **Inntravel** (01653 628811; fax 628741): Ustaoset Hotel, Ustaoset, from £325 (air/rail travel, 7 nights half board, plus lunch pack); Hotel Cascade, Ceillac, from £479 (travel by Eurostar, 7 nights half board). **Snow and Rock** (01932 569569; fax 569568): cross-country recreational package, boots, skis, bindings & poles, £149.50, from the shops or by mail order.

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**COAST & COUNTRYSIDE</**



Arnie Wilson and his girlfriend Lucy Dicker skied 10 miles a day for 365 days with 790 vertical miles in 240 resorts around the world. Then tragedy struck. By Stephen Wood

Arnie Wilson took up skiing seriously only at the age of 30. A dedicated tobogganist as a child, when his family lived in Switzerland, he had - as he thought -

It was the travel editor of *Vogue* who, in 1990, floated the possibility of skiing in every month of the year. Arnie wrote fictional account of such a venture for the magazine, and then toyed with the idea of making it fact. "It was just a silly idea," he says — until he mentioned it to Lucy, a Frenchwoman who worked as general manager for a ski tour company in London, and with whom he was already having an affair. "It was almost as if it was what she had been waiting for: Lucy always dreamed of having a great adventure. When she said, 'Let's do it together,' it became a possibility. And then it gathered its own momentum."

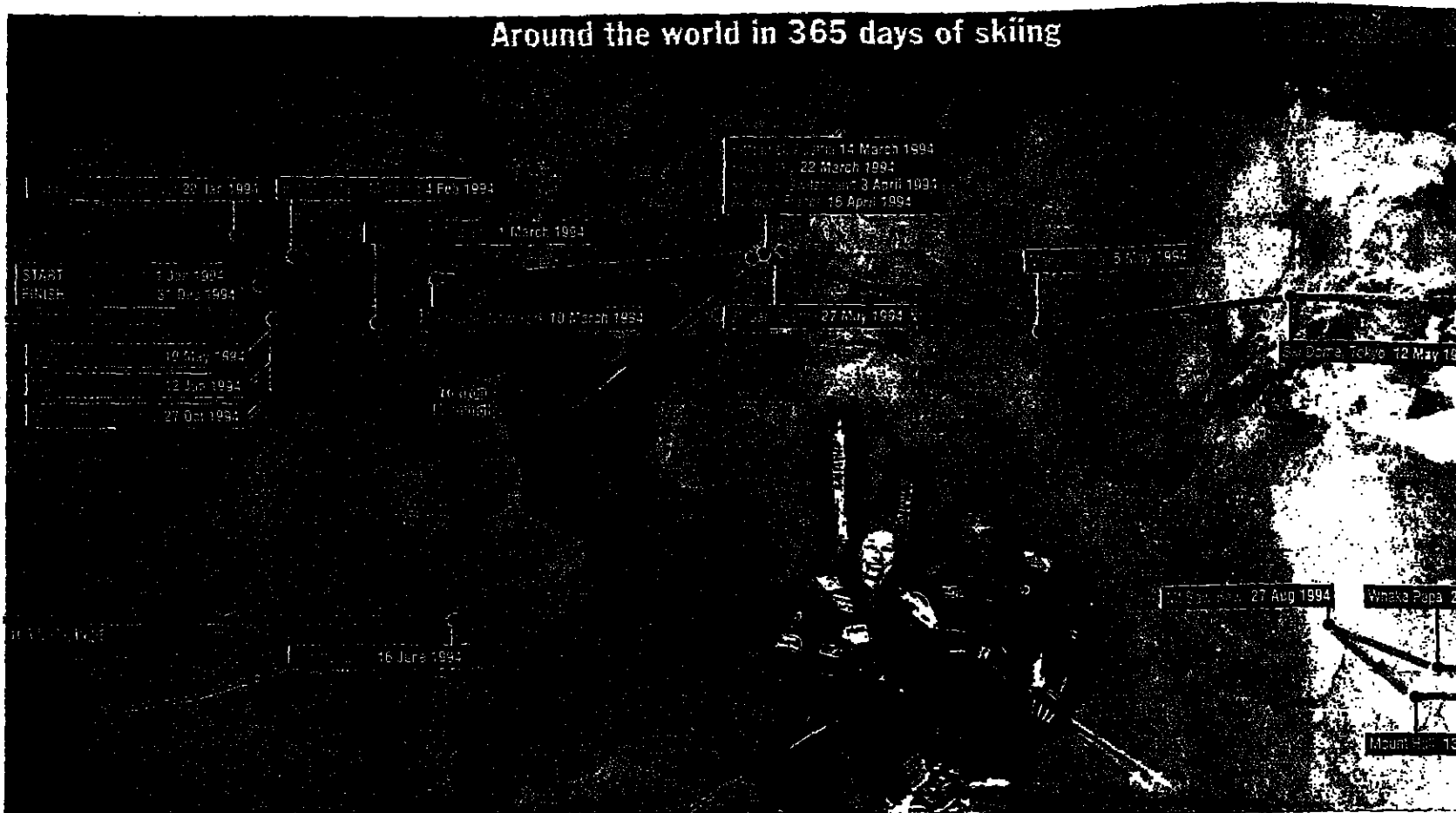
They were an unlikely pair of adven-

turners: she was short-sighted but too vain to wear glasses; he was overweight; and both seemed to have had a limitless ability to get lost – not just driving at night in a hailstorm on New Zealand's Mount Hutt, but even in their own hotel. The book details the calamities ("It makes a better story when things don't go smoothly" says Arnie), including their truck blowing up in Argentina, Arnie carrying on skiing despite wearing a catheter to deal with a urinary problem, desperate (but always successful) attempts to find a place to ski when the light was fading and the snow melting – and, much more distressing to read, the terrible rows they had. Arnie was adamant that the book should be true to Lucy's memory, and this

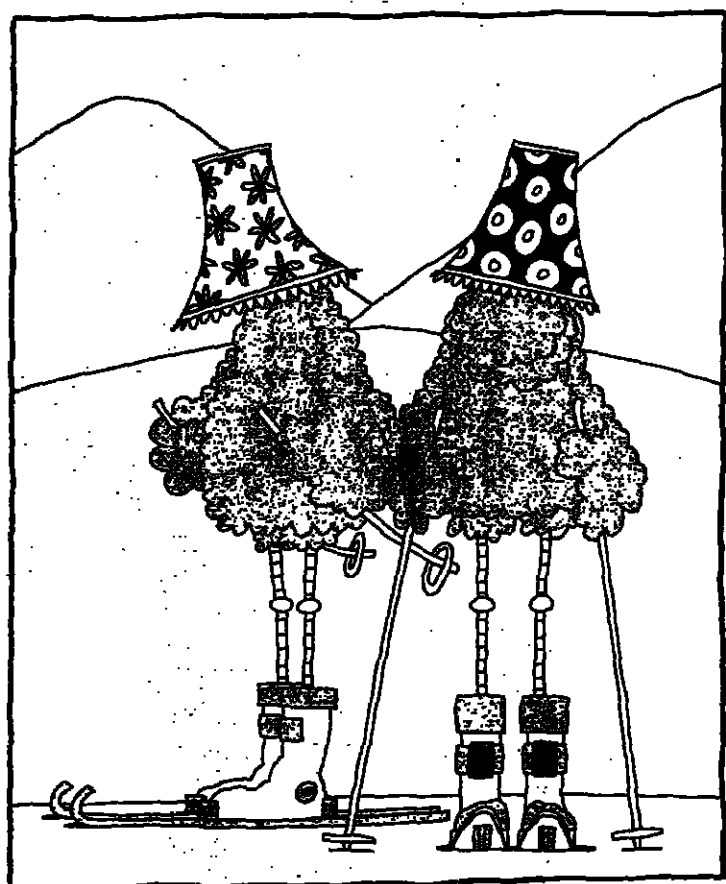
But their experiences won't convert many to summer skiing, particularly in India (where they found no working ski-lifts) and Japan (where they clocked up two hours' skiing on Tokyo's indoor snow-piste, and then £100 on a cab fare into

Writing about it, however, was "a nightmare". He started writing with Lucy. He made a second start after her death, during months of terrible grief - "I kept ask-

*'Tears in the Snow: a True Story of Love, Courage and Danger' is published on 29 November (Blake Publishing, £15.99).*



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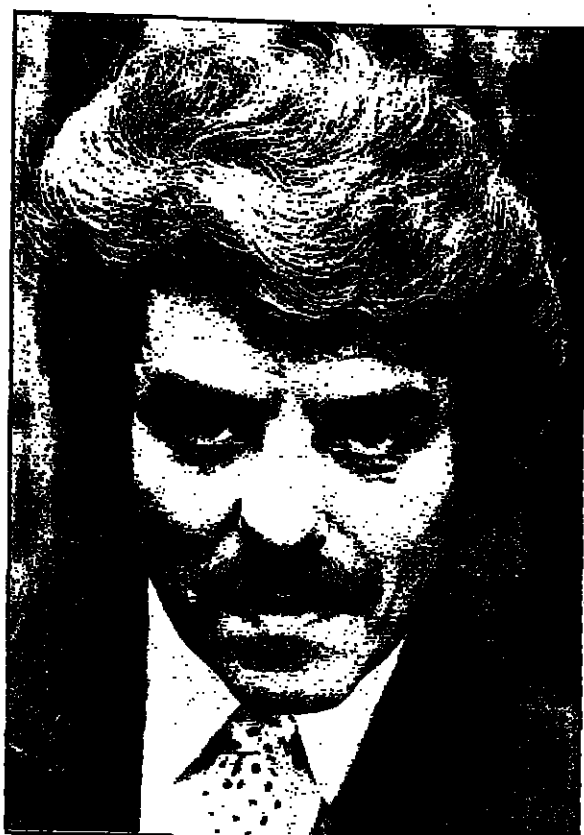
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## The crash I didn't see

My biggest mistake

Investment guru  
Bob Beckman

"My biggest mistake was in May 1972, when I predicted the Financial Times 30-share index, which was the main stock market measure at the time, would go through 700. The index had just moved above the 520 level for the first time in about eight years, and I thought that move was pointing to much higher prices to come. What happened was that the index rose another 25 points, and then turned around and plunged. Between May 1972 and January 1976, it lost nearly 70 per cent of its value."

That particular mistake didn't really cost me that much money in terms of my own personal investments, but it has been used as a whip for the media to beat me for the past 24 years.

The media started to pay attention to my work in the late 1960s, and one of my forecasts was that the FT30 would reach the level of 520, not go much higher and then fall to 300 before reaching a

level of 520 again. In other words, I was saying a bear market was imminent – and it was. It happened. But I was in disagreement with everyone else. You don't win any popularity contests for being right on your own, you win popularity contests if you're right when everybody else is right.

When that bear market hit bottom at 305 in February 1970, I became very bullish and said: 'Now is the time to buy shares, when everybody else is bearish.' And I was right again. The index got up to the 520s in May 1972, and then, because I thought they'd climb further, I was finally, ruefully wrong.

Journalists said: 'Now is the time to develop a contrary Beckman indicator. Beckman was bullish at the very, very top, so whenever Beckman is bullish, turn bearish, and whenever Beckman is bearish, turn bullish.' That went on for years, and it all started with that one bad forecast.

When that 1972-1975 recession hit, I didn't expect

it. I began to question myself on why. How could I possibly miss one of the worst recessions we'd seen since the Great Depression?

So I started to examine a lot of the economic tools which I had been using and the financial tools which had given me that target of 700 for the 30-share index. I started to question it and began to look at some of the long-term cyclical economists that I didn't pay too much attention to while I was at university. I should have been paying attention, because they were the type of people who would have been able to forecast the 1972-75 recession.

As a result of that, I changed my way of economic thinking. I abandoned all the micro-economic tools I had been using, and started looking at the economy on a much more macro basis, and started to look at long-term cyclical trends. It was a real watershed in my approach to the investment and the economy. It taught me that I didn't know

everything and that I should look at things in a much broader scope, which I have been doing ever since. It's made me much more cautious and much more conservative. And I haven't made a forecasting error of anything like that magnitude since.

I forecast the 1987 Crash 10 days before it happened on LBC and in my publication, *Investors' Bulletin*. So many people claim to have predicted the 1987 Crash, it's hard to believe how it could ever have happened. But I did forecast it, and that's well-documented. On the surface, everything in the UK and US equity markets looked fairly calm. But, beneath the surface, there was a tremendous amount of turbulence. Technically, it just looked like it was crumbling, and big divergences were building up between the leading indices and the broad market. I had sold out before then, because I'm a value investor, and with my own personal money, I just didn't like the

values that equities were offering. I didn't sell out because I saw a Crash was coming. I sold out because I liked bond markets better.

What I try to explain to people is that markets are non-linear dynamic systems. That means today's influence may not be the same as tomorrow's influence. Today we may have share prices going up because interest rates fall. Next week we may have them going up because interest rates do the opposite. There is no such thing as a fixed cause and effect. The only hitching post an investor has is value. When he sees markets offering good value, good yields, good dividend covers, reasonable price/earnings ratios, that's the time to be there. When he sees markets that offer poor relative values, the investor should pull in his horns.

Bob Beckman's latest book is "Housquake" (Rushmore Winne, £14.95). He was talking to Paul Slade.

## Taxmen give notice on redundancy pay

Employees will lose out, writes Nic Cicutti

Hundreds of thousands of people facing the grim prospect of redundancy may be hit even harder by an additional tax sting from the Inland Revenue, unless action is taken now to minimise the blow.

Revenue officials say they intend to tax payments in lieu of notice made to staff who are made redundant. This much stricter interpretation of tax rules, announced in August, is part of the taxman's bid to claw back some of the estimated £1.5bn foregone each year from payments made to staff who lose their jobs.

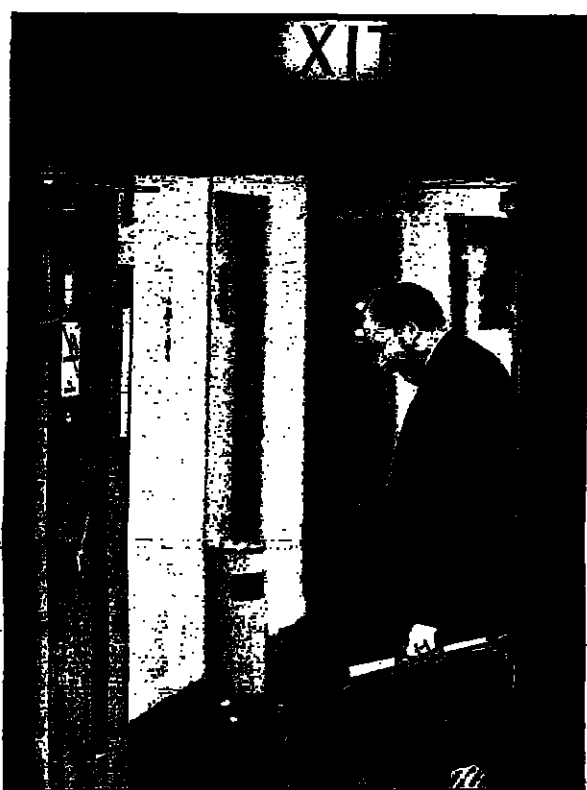
At present, employees do not have to pay tax on the first £30,000 of their redundancy payoff.

This is the statutory amount based on gross salary, age and number of years' service. Maximum payments are £205 a week, up to a total of £6,150. But many companies, either through union pressure or because they feel generous, have redundancy agreements considerably in excess of this amount.

When employees lose their jobs, employers will usually top up any redundancy payment with the salary normally paid in lieu of notice, be that one, three or six months' worth of money. As long as the combined amount was under the £30,000 limit, no tax was levied on it.

The Inland Revenue has always contested this practice, arguing that payments in lieu of notice (or Pilots, as experts call them) are part of a separate contractual agreement between a company and its employee and therefore subject to tax.

In August, the taxman



The only way is down: Redundant employees will be hit with an extra sting from the Revenue

pounced. The Revenue said it no longer intended to permit Pilots to be untaxed. One month later, Thorn EMI lost a case linked to the same issue which it had argued before the Special Commissioners, arbitrators in tax matters. The company is considering an appeal to the High Court.

The upshot has been a mad scramble by employers to get round the new restriction. One common device is to remove any reference to Pilots, whether at the company's discretion or otherwise, from employees' contracts of employment.

Employers hope that by doing so, the Revenue will be

unable to argue that any notice paid to staff alongside their redundancy payments forms part of a contractual agreement between both sides.

John Whiting, a tax partner at Price Waterhouse, the chartered accountants, and also chairman of the Chartered Institute of Taxation, says: "The Revenue's position is a pre-emptive strike against these payments. I suppose we should at least be grateful that they have decided to stake out their position so clearly."

"It makes eminent sense to strike out such a clause [of pay in lieu of notice] in a con-

tract of employment if this is simply stated as a discretionary right on the part of the company. But I can understand the fears of employees who may fear that they are losing a right to something, even if it does not amount to much."

Mr Whiting says that while taxmen can still examine the overall redundancy payment between the individual and the company to determine whether part of the payoff is made up of Pilot, this option may still be the best available.

Union experts argue that where salary in lieu of notice is not a discretionary arrangement, a separate deal whereby a person waives this right at the moment of redundancy in return for a separately enhanced payoff is the best alternative. However, this is likely to come under even tighter – and negative – Revenue scrutiny.

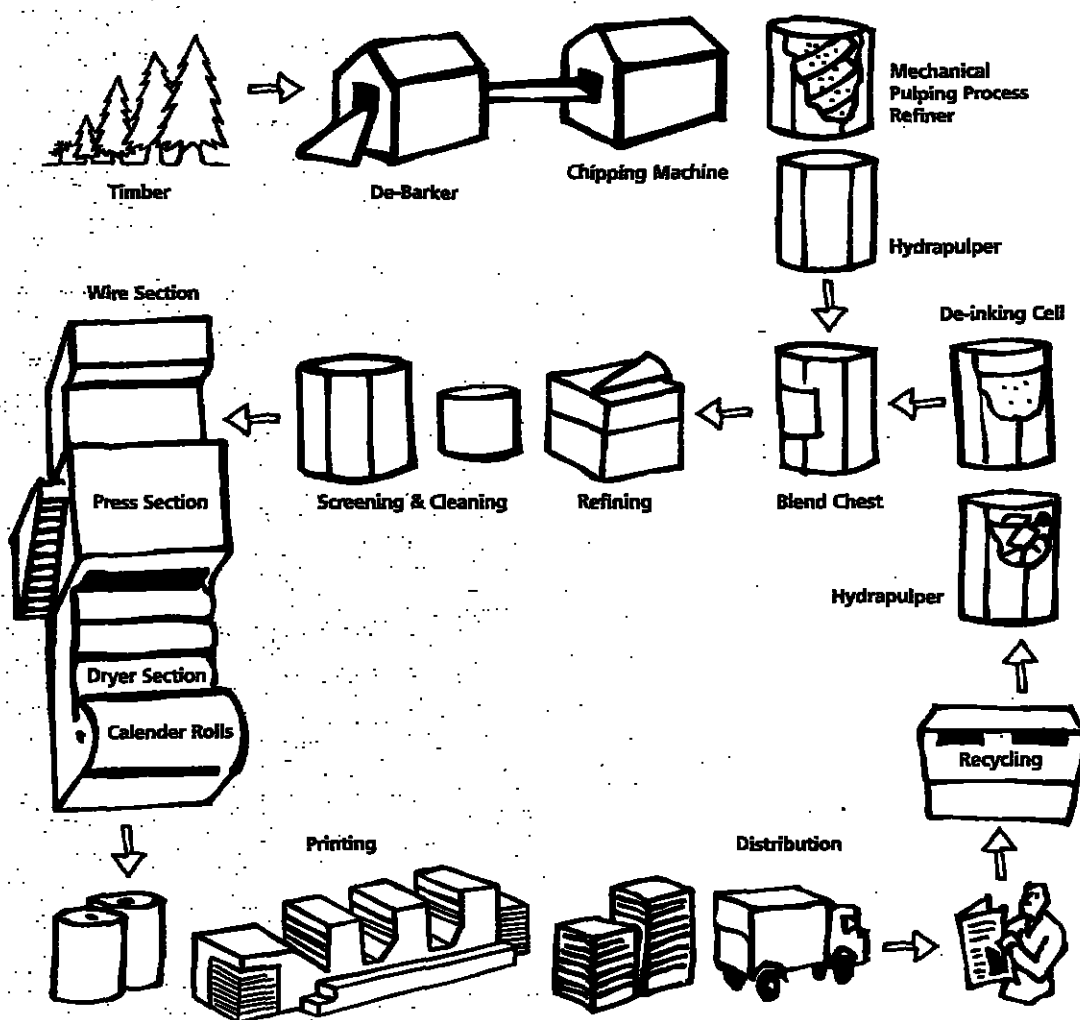
A company always had the right to deny Pilots to staff, forcing them to work out their notice instead, however unlikely in the event of redundancy.

But staff should seek to ensure that in the event of a successful High Court challenge by Thorn EMI or another firm, their employer will reinstate the Pilot provision in their contracts, discretionary or otherwise.

The key question is whether a firm will continue to make such payments even though they are no longer even referred to as a discretionary option in the contract of employment.

Ultimately, it all comes down to how much you trust your boss. In today's climate, that may not be further than you can throw him.

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# The Chancellor sharpens his axe

On Tuesday, the Budget will be handed down. Nic Cicutti asks what is likely to be sacrificed

As with so many other annual rituals, the Budget is almost upon us. Ahead of it will come the pundits' predictions, followed shortly afterwards by the briefest of struggles when their forecasts turn out to be totally wrong. It is still useful to examine some of the options available to the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, if only so that should he rule against some of the more painful measures, it will almost seem as if he has done us a big favour.

Most experts believe this is likely to be an intensely political Budget, with the City's expectations of financial probity tempered by strong electoral imperatives. Not that it has halted furious lobbying by interest groups. The Chartered Institute of Taxation, experts in tax law, have long argued for a simplified system.

David Frost, president of the CIT, says: "Urgent reforms are required, including a simplification of tax bands, a review of legislation covering employee benefits in kind and a commitment to integrate National Insurance contributions and income tax."

While root-and-branch reform is unlikely, Mr Clarke is expected to

cut the basic rate of income tax, possibly by a penny or two, bringing it further down towards the 20 per cent target set by the Conservatives several years ago.

However, there is little hope that he will take millions of people out of the tax net altogether, by raising the personal allowance threshold significantly above £3,765 or increasing the 20 per cent tax ceiling beyond £3,900 on top of that. After all, there are precious few votes to be gained from such a strategy.

More likely are changes designed to ease the Capital Gains Tax burden faced by some investors on profits from the sale of shares and second homes.

CGT is fiendishly complicated to calculate and administer. The first £6,300 of realised profits are free of CGT and, in any case, it is possible to minimise the tax further.

The Government has said that it would like to simplify and, if possible, abolish CGT completely. Politically, it would also send the right message to potential Tory deserters.

Options here include reducing the CGT rate or giving more relief to assets held for longer periods,

What they fear and what they expect from Mr Clarke

## The hope

- Reduction in basic-rate tax by at least 1 per cent
- Rise in personal tax allowance above inflation
- Abolish 1 per cent stamp duty on house purchases above £60,000
- Scrap or increase £200,000 IHT ceiling
- Abolish or simplify CGT
- Increase investments in PEPs from £6,000 to £7,500 and single-company PEPs to £5,000

theoretically rewarding "responsible" long-term investors.

Another area the Government may tackle is Inheritance Tax (IHT). Last year, Mr Major indicated he wanted to scrap IHT.

Mr Clarke raised the limit below which IHT need not be paid on a dead person's estate (including property) from £140,000 to £200,000.

Raising IHT levels, while seemingly generous, need not affect huge numbers, as most of us inherit



well below the current £200,000 tax-free limit.

One area where the Government may continue its inexorable march is the long-running reduction of mortgage tax relief (Miras). This has already suffered under successive Chancellors, having been cut from the marginal rate of tax to just 15 per cent by 1994. The £30,000 mortgage limit for Miras has been frozen for years.

Last year, Mr Clarke's hand was temporarily stayed by a housing

## The fear

- Increase in insurance premium tax
- Slash tax-free redundancy entitlements
- Increase in employers' National Insurance contributions
- Reduce or end mortgage tax relief
- Remove tax breaks from pension contributions
- Limit tax relief on popular PEPs or Tessas

market in crisis. This year, prices have picked up and he may not be feeling so generous.

Paradoxically, the effect of a reduction in Miras may have a very minor effect on mortgage lenders' tendency to raise home loan interest rates. After the recent rise in base rates, most lenders said they would reserve judgement on whether to follow suit on mortgages until they digested the City's verdict on the Budget.

While unlikely, there may be a

calculation in some quarters that a still-fragile housing market could ill-afford a combined attack from the Chancellor on Miras, plus an immediate raise in rates.

For potential home buyers who feel that the Chancellor is set to give away all bar the kitchen sink, thereby prompting the City to demand higher interest rates, fixing now is key.

While the Chancellor is unlikely to widen breaks for tax-free investments such as personal equity plans, he may act to rescue two forgotten higher-risk investments - Venture Capital Trusts and Enterprise Investment Schemes - that have not proved universally popular. Some experts hope the Government may increase VCT and EIS tax breaks from 20 to 40 per cent, in line with the marginal rates paid by many of their most likely investors.

For the rest of us, the hope is that Mr Clarke does not home in on easy taxes that have a high, but hidden effect on our living standards.

One such levy is Insurance Premium Tax (IPT), charged at a rate of about 3 per cent on anything from AA membership to travel insurance.

Despite claims in 1993, when IPT was introduced, that it would cost an average family just £18 a year, the real figures are at least twice and perhaps three times that amount. The industry fears a doubling of IPT, leading to significantly higher insurance bills.

Sandy Dunn, managing director for Touchline Insurance, said: "A notable rise in motor insurance premiums across the industry is inevitable in the coming months. The fact that premiums have been kept artificially low by competitive pressures has already forced some players to leave the market."

"A rise in IPT would make the burden of rising premiums even greater for the consumer. Doubling levels would add another £10 to the average motor policy."

Mr Dunn warned that one side-effect of such a rise would be to accentuate a trend among young or less well-off motorists towards cheaper third-party-only insurance.

Whichever way the Chancellor moves next Tuesday, be prepared for some sleight of hand. Headline-grabbing tax cuts are one thing but it needs to be paid for somehow. One way or another, it will come out of our own pockets.

## Win on the swings and roundabouts

John Windsor on riches to be found at the fair

All the fun of the fair, the circus and the amusement arcade is going under the hammer. At the age of 24, auctioneer Steve Hunt, who bought his first fairground ride at the age of 14, has cornered the lion's share of the auction market in antique amusements.

An Edwardian hand-cranked roundabout with 12 carved wooden horses in original paint, suspended on brass barley-twist rods, fetched £6,000 last year at one of his quarterly auctions of fairground art and slot machines. A circus trapeze safety net made £25, a Thirties Mills one-armed bandit £700 - and ten tons of mixed elephant and horse manure a fiver. (The pile had been rotting nicely since Gerry Cottle sold the elephants four years ago, but the lone bidder has yet to carry off his scoop).

Fairground art - whose brightly painted carved animals and gold-rococo scrollwork makes it one of the most robust genres of Victorian popular art - is getting scarcer and scarcer. Showmen's yards, where dismantled roundabouts and swingboats were stored for the winter then finally abandoned, have been plundered by dealers, says Mr Hunt. "There are no great finds left," he reckons.

Only 50 of the 400 lots at his next quarterly sale on Sunday 1 December at 1pm at the Colville School at Cherry Hinton, Cambridgeshire, are fairground art, the rest mostly amusement machines. Until this year he could expect double that number of fairground pieces. Among the few on offer are five roundabout animals carved in the Forties or Fifties - including a pig, a cockerel and a horse, expected to fetch £600-£700 each.

Last year saw the 18th and final auction of carved fairground animals and carousel art at Brillscote Farm, in Wiltshire. Before going under the hammer, the stock used to earn its keep on hire to film studios. Grierson Gower, co-founder of Brillscote Farm Auctions, said the business rate, levied on showmen's



Lots of interest: Buyers at an auction of fairground equipment

Photo: News Team

yards and even parked fairground wagons, had been the last straw.

"There was nowhere else for the rides to be stored. Now they're practically all gone."

You might think that nostalgia would drive collectors and dealers to compete hotly for the diminishing supply of fairground art. Hardly.

Collectors and dealers at Mr Hunt's auctions do not appear eager to drive up prices. They are niggardly bidders. They eye each other like hawks and have developed the habit - infuriating to auctioneers - of allowing goods to go unsold then crowding to the auctioneer's rostrum to broach after-sale deals at low prices.

A 1907 fairground Cake Walk (jiggling platform), one of only five left, was haggled over for three months after a sale last year before changing hands at £30,000.

Fairgrounders do occasionally boost bidding. A ghost train's Bride of Dracula in coffin, in working order with sound effects, fetched £510, and will no doubt recoup the outlay by reminding customers to order Bloody Marys. A two-headed calf, one of several taxidermic freaks, made £210. Despite the fussy bidding,

the quarterly auctions of Mr Hunt's Antique Amusement Company are the biggest in Europe - big enough to get him barred from the village hall at Stow-cum-Quay, Cambridgeshire, where his £5 entrance fee (admits two; free catalogue) was considered exorbitant.

These are serious auctions, he retorts, "not occasions for locals to drink tea". His own private collection is the talk of the trade. At one of his own auctions last year, he put in the winning bid of £4,000 for an 1895 Cavioli organ, once the centrepiece of a galloper roundabout.

The set of six Edwardian solid oak adult swing-boats with unique brass hanging rods was almost unnoticed in an auction in Norfolk, carelessly catalogued as "child's swing boat". Having paid £510 for it and restored it, Mr Hunt says he would not be parted from it at any price.

He tours his slot machines in a trailer pulled by a Land Rover. punters pay £1 for 20 old pennies. It does not matter much if they nick a few; replacements cost only £30 per 1,000 in the trade.

The 1890-model Winchester repeater rifles in his shooting gallery fire live ammunition. It was not the regulation of the supply of live ammunition in the Sixties that led showmen to switch to air rifles, he says, but the fact that they suspected the taxman had access to ammo suppliers' receipts, revealing how much fairground folk had bought from them.

Then there is Mr Hunt's temperamental candy floss machine. Bought for £1,000 it promised big profits from spun sugar on a stick costing only 4p a go to make and selling for

50p. But the spinning drum that throws molten sugar through a wire mesh demands skilful manipulation. At first, in Mr Hunt's inexperienced hands, it went out of control, draping the walls of his parents' kitchen with sticky pink cobwebs.

His most cherished relic is the only surviving fragment of William Taylor's Bioscope, or travelling cinema, of 1903-4 - a panel from its 100ft illuminated frontage, with carved face and sunburst, dotted with light-bulb sockets. He bought it at one of his own auctions. "I love this," he says. "In fact I like everything that's over-the-top, opulent."

Besides regular auctions, he publishes the monthly *Antiques Amusements Magazine*. It carries advertisements such as: "Help! Does anybody know where I can get a set of reel strips for a Mills handi?" and "It pays to buy Baker's de-crappinated pennies. The hand-sorted, premium selected pennies in Baker's mixture work our fair cheaper than other bags of corroded crap."

Mr Hunt now wants to buy a seaside pier - the only one of three lifetime ambitions still unfulfilled. The other two were to own an amusement arcade and a fair. He covets the west pier in Brighton, which closed 20 years ago and lost its middle section, in storms in 1987. It would cost him a lot of pennies to put right: around two billion.

Steve Hunt, Antique Amusement Co. (01223-813041 or 0850-813712). Brillscote Farm Auctions shop 21a Camden Passage, London N1 (0171-359-2397), warehouse 127 Pancras Road, London NW1 (0171-387 6039).



## Read about the Budget in *The Independent*

Andrew Marr, Donald MacIntyre, Polly Toynbee, Gavyn Davies of Goldman Sachs, Suzanne Moore, Hamish McRae, David Aaronovitch and Jeremy Warner will write on the Budget next Wednesday.

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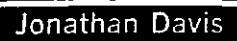
## Nic Cicutti looks at new ways to move house

The offer is saddled with compulsory buildings and contents insurance, plus a £295 arrangement fee and the usual penalties. But it does include free unemployment insurance and the facility to

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A semi-detached period cottage at Hope Cove, five miles from Salcombe, is just 50 yards from the beach and not much further to two pubs in the village. Yalesey's roof was probably originally thatch, but is now slate and some restoration work is needed.

With two bedrooms and a beamed sitting room, it's for sale through Marchand Petit in Kingsbridge 01548 857588) for £79,500.



**'There are only two conclusions any sensible investor can draw. Either gilts are too cheap, or Italian and Spanish yields are too low'**

The differential between German and Club Med countries has fallen, in other words, to well below .2 per cent. Yet less than a year ago it was more than twice as large — 4 per cent to 5 per cent. Two years ago Italian bonds were priced well into double figures — 6 per cent more than German bonds. That

But even so, there are only two concisions any sensible investor can draw. Either gilts are too cheap by comparison with their European counterparts, or *Italian and Spanish yields* are too low. Despite recent signs of a pick-up in inflation, my view is that gilts are not unattractive at current levels, and I expect them to become more attractive still as the election approaches. At these prices, a real return of 4 to 5 per cent is not a bad reward for the risks involved. More likely still is that the markets' sudden burst of enthusiasm for the EMU convergence story will prove unsustainable – and that the differential in bond prices will adjust accordingly. If that happens, then some smart people are going to make a lot more money from the process unwinding itself.

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London's Jubilee line extension opens in 1998. Rosalind Russell looks at the market in its path

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# Catchment area is all ...

Seeking a house near a good school? Penny Jackson advises

There is nothing like a discussion about schools to fire a gathering of parents. No matter if the children are three or 13, the choices seem hard. But whether driven by pragmatism or by principle, people agree on one thing: where you live matters. Not surprisingly, the annual Schools League Table, published this week, has become a Bible for the house hunting family.

Among those poring over it are parents who have always promised themselves a move out of the city. If we lived in the country, they say, we wouldn't have to pay for private schools. But some of those who have taken the plunge recently have found the dream team of free education and the perfect country house somewhat elusive. In areas where the state schools are excellent, parents who blithely inform an estate agent of their plans to live in a period house in a popular catchment area are likely to be met with raised eyebrows.

North of London, Bedfordshire's education system is the envy of the fee-paying parent. In certain areas it is the comprehensive schools that provide the pull. In the pretty Georgian market town of Ampthill, Nigel Croft, the headteacher of Redborne Upper School, is used to parents producing, with a flourish, the exact distance between home and school. Nor is it unusual to find "wanted" notices for houses in the area. "We try to match demand by expanding," he says, "but we cannot guarantee a place unless a child lives in the catchment area, although we haven't as yet turned people away."

In Ampthill, Tony Jaski, of Country Properties, has noticed that the school

league tables have led to a greater demand for property in the area. "There is a waiting list for houses in the unspoilt villages and you would expect to pay about £200,000 for a substantial family house." The Georgian houses in Ampthill rarely change hands, though. Meanwhile, north of Bedford, in the village of Sharnbrook, Sharnbrook Upper School has received Ofsted's highest accolade and is regarded as a competitor to the highly selective private schools.

Richard Jones, of Jackson-Stops & Staff, would himself consider moving into the Sharnbrook catchment area. "Those who want to save on school fees may find themselves spending more on a house than they expected. One couple who started looking at £150,000 found themselves going up to £225,000."

Price is not the main stumbling block for those wanting to move to Kent. When Ros Smith left south-west London for the garden county and told agents she was looking for a house in the catchment area of Cranbrook School, a grant-maintained co-ed grammar school with boarding places, she was not given much cause for hope. "I could see them thinking, 'oh, here comes another one'." Once the Smiths' 13-year-old son was accepted at the school, they decided to rent. "We now know that house prices are about 10 to 15 per cent higher in the catchment area and there are a lot of agents chasing the same properties. Some people spend more than a year looking for the right house, which is depressing," says Mrs Smith.

The Smiths are part of a continuous stream of families leaving London, many

of them drawn to Cranbrook by word of mouth. Local estate agent Oliver Fisher refers to it as "the dinner party circuit". "The local schooling has a good reputation across the sectors. The problem is, our supply of property is down 50 per cent on last year. People come down here with the ideal in mind of a quiet country house within striking distance of the school, and these are few and far between. One such couple eventually bought a modern house on a busy road, specifically to get into the catchment area." But even though people are frustrated by the house famine, particularly in the £180,000 to £350,000 bracket, they are not throwing caution to the winds.

Robin Tillet, of Knight Frank in Tunbridge Wells, says no one is prepared to pay silly prices. "We have a modernish house down a long forestry track, in the Cranbrook catchment area, on the mar-

ket for £255,000. We have had enormous interest in it. It is not yet sold, but we do have an offer on it." The half-a-million-plus market, he went on to say, is stronger than at any time in the past five years, but while buyers are prepared to make small compromises, they will not spend £600,000 for a house on a main road. "They want a copper-bottomed investment with easy rail communications. This could be the family home for the next 20 years, and no one wants to make a mistake."

Indeed, compromise is something most newcomers to the Cranbrook area are familiar with. "When we bought two years ago, our house was described as 'very tired'," says Catherine Scales. "We compromised on its condition and on the noise, but there again we needed to be on a bus route. A house for the same price in London would be meticulously decorated. We were definitely buying the lifestyle."



Redborne Upper School (top) in the Georgian market town of Ampthill (above): school league tables have led to a greater demand for property in the area, according to local estate agents

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